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LETTERS
ON
Female Character.
By
MRS. VIRGINIA GARY



RICHMOND, VA
Published by J. Wicks.

Handwritten signature

LETTERS
ON
FEMALE CHARACTER,

ADDRESSED TO
A Young Lady,
OF THE
DEATH OF HER MOTHER.

BY MRS. VIRGINIA CARY.

Let others fly to pleasure's distant dome;
Be mine the dearer task to please at home.

HALEY'S *Triumphs of Temper.*

"Thy husband shall have rule over thee." Gen. iii. 16.

"The price of a virtuous woman is far above rubies." Prov. xxxi. 10.

"Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord,
she shall be praised." Prov. xxxi. 30.

SECOND EDITION—ENLARGED.

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Richmond, Va.

PUBLISHED BY ARIEL WORKS.
PHILADELPHIA—TOWAR, J. & D. M. HOGAN.

1830.

Eastern District of Virginia, to wit :

BE IT REMEMBERED, that on the fourth day of January, in the fifty-fourth year of the Independence of the United States of America, Ariel Works, of the said district, hath deposited in this office, the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as proprietor, in the words following, to wit :

“ Letters on Female Character, addressed to a Young Lady, on the Death of her Mother. By Mrs. Virginia Cary.

‘ Let others fly to pleasure’s distant dome,
‘ Be mine the dearer task to please at home.’

Halcy’s Triumphs of Temper.

‘ Thy husband shall have rule over thee.’ *Gen.* iii. 16.

‘ The price of a virtuous woman is far above rubies.’ *Prov.* xxxi. 10.

‘ Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.’ *Prov.* xxxi. 30.

Second Edition—Enlarged.”

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THE reader is requested to bear in mind, that the little work here offered for perusal, was undertaken at the particular request of some Christian friends, who proposed "Bennett's Letters," as a general model to the author. In consequence of this limitation in her plan, she has given some sketches of character illustrative of her precepts, after the manner of Dr. B. These are drawn from a *general*, and not an *individual* acquaintance with human nature; and many of the most striking warnings are derived from the author's own experience of the evils inherent in her own nature. In no single instance has she drawn a real likeness in all its parts, from any living example, though she has sketched traits of character which are common to many persons of her acquaintance.

She gives this little explanation in consequence of her having been told by censorious people, that her characters bore so strong a resemblance to persons of their acquaintance, that they were convinced she meant to hold them up to public contempt. None could have cast this imputation but those utterly unacquainted with the author's real character, or her true motives in writing this work; and she is convinced, that those capable of appreciating motives of Christian duty, and a desire for Christian usefulness, will acquit her of so odious a charge.



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DEDICATION.

THE Second Edition of "Letters on Female Character," is respectfully dedicated to the Rev. STEPHEN TAYLOR, Pastor of the Presbyterian Church on Shochoe Hill, in the City of Richmond.

The author takes this method of evincing her grateful sense of the disinterested support awarded to her by Mr. Taylor, under circumstances of peculiar delicacy and embarrassment. Whilst those from whom she expected encouragement in her humble effort at Christian usefulness, shrunk from the smallest testimony of approbation, Mr. Taylor soothed her timid embarrassment by avowing a full appreciation of her motives, and a cordial approval of her undertaking. In other words, he encouraged the poor widow to drop her two mites into the treasury of the Lord, instead of scorning so poor an offering.

The "Letters" are considerably altered and enlarged, and the author humbly trusts they will be found rather more worthy of the public attention than the first edition. She has not proceeded without deep and prayerful consideration of her subject, neither has she thus intruded herself on the public

attention without satisfactory evidence that this particular path of duty has been chosen for her by Him who makes use of all his creatures as seemeth good unto him. She dares not withhold her one talent at a time when so much is doing, and so much is to be done for the cause supremely dear to her heart, lest it should be taken from her and given to him who hath ten talents.

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INTRODUCTION.

IN this age of intellectual improvement, women have been admitted to a liberal participation of intellectual privileges. The lights of science and knowledge have been suffered to penetrate the night of ignorance, in which custom and prejudice had enveloped the female mind. There exists no longer that watchful jealousy of every step towards emancipation, which once made man the tyrant and oppressor of his feminine coadjutor. Women hold their appropriate station in the scale of being, without contention. They are allowed to mingle freely in the minor concerns of the social compact, and have full scope afforded to their latent energies. Their minds are no longer cramped by rigid, domestic discipline, but soar above the narrow limits of family avocations, and catch a glimpse of those lights hitherto reserved for their master spirits. The consequences of this partial illumination, are fraught with beneficial effects to social life. Man has truly a help meet, and woman is fulfilling her destiny according to the original design of her Maker.

But these advantages are liable to abuse, from those erring spirits, who grasp at more than their allotted portion of power. Some aspiring females are not content to retain any vestige of subordination to the anointed lords of the creation. They aim at equality of rights; in other words, at absolute dominion: for it will be found, that whenever man consents to this illegal usurpation of *equal* privileges, he inevitably prepares himself for yielding, and his compa-

nion for asserting, despotic authority. Let us refer to such individual instances of a struggle for supremacy, as may have fallen under our observation, for the truth of this assertion. But when woman breaks down the barrier erected by Omnipotence around her, she renders herself liable to the full penalty of God's violated law. She was *formed for man*, and therefore must continue in contented subordination to his authority. As she was first in the transgression, it is additionally incumbent on her to make up to man, by dutiful obedience, for the evil she has occasioned him. It was for her offence that he was banished from his home of bliss. This thought should cast down her high aspirations, and stimulate her to endure contentedly a lot which is sweetened by many mercies.

That man is capable of exalted respect and affection for his female companion, is clearly exemplified in the history of our first parents. "The woman tempted me, and I did eat," was Adam's excuse for disobedience; it is therefore plain, that man was intuitively impressed with a high idea of the importance of his help meet. The Lord implanted this feeling in his nature, as a guarantee for the safety of the weaker sex. Man still retains this sense of regard and respectful observance, in all nations where God is worshipped. Among the heathen, a contrary practice is well known to predominate; a strong evidence that woman owes to her Maker, the attention she receives from her partner on earth.

In our happy country, the female sex are just beginning to participate in the benefits of rapidly progressing refinement. Education, such as deserves the name, is beginning to draw forth the innate energies of the female mind. It should be the object of all who really aim at moral improvement, to assist in developing the faculties of so large a portion of the human race. *To train women for usefulness* is the object of the following little unpretending work. In

it they will find their appropriate duties explained, and their prevailing foibles noticed. They will find, it is to be hoped, much to encourage them to virtuous exertion, and little to stimulate that vanity which is said to be their rightful inheritance. The rising generation are now under female dominion. As the twig is bent in their hands, so will the patriarch of the forest incline, when years have spread his branches to the clouds. The peculiar difficulties of our southern housewives, are taken into consideration in the following pages, and a few hints offered to their acceptance.

All the domestic arts admit of improvement from the combined energy and ingenuity of female genius. When it is considered how short a portion of a short life *can* be devoted to the pursuit of pleasure, it is surely the part of wisdom to dispense entirely with that disqualifying era, that the mind may give its undivided energies to the cause of virtue. If the female who peruses this page is a devotee of fashion—a votary of pleasure,—I would here solemnly inquire of her, in the name of her Maker and Redeemer, what are her expectations in the life to come? When she stands before the judgment seat, and takes a hurried retrospect of past years, how will her present pursuits appear? What benefit will then accrue from her triumphs of vanity; from her indulgences of sense; from the trifling, flippant pursuits which have wasted precious time, and degraded precious talents? Let her now pause, and reflect that she can, by an instantaneous recantation of error, avert inevitable ruin. She can turn while it is to-day, and prepare for that eternity which may, perchance, commence to-morrow. If this hint should arrest one wanderer from the path of reason and rectitude, the author will have cause to pour forth rejoicings for ever to him who condescends to aid the feeble efforts of his creatures. The following anecdote will suffice to close this brief notice.

A votary of fashion once adorned herself splendidly for a ball. On her way to the scene of folly, she was accosted by a miserable object, who implored bread to keep him from starvation. "I have no money," said the lady; the wretched creature passed on. At the ball, an intense pain smote the temples of the young female, who was carried to her bed in delirium. After a severe illness, she recovered to a new state of feeling and thinking. She declared that during her delirium she saw the beggar in Abraham's bosom, and called to him for a drop of water to cool her parched tongue; that he heard her cry, and came, bidding her beware lest the gulf which could not be crossed, should open before he came again.

LETTERS

ON

FEMALE CHARACTER.

LETTER I.

Consolations of Religion.

MY DEAR MARY,

Your present situation excites my keenest sympathy, and awakens in my heart an earnest desire to do something for you, that will prove my disinterested affection. The loss you have sustained, by the removal of your beloved mother to a better world, must always be severely felt, even when time and resignation have subdued the violence of natural grief. You will perhaps feel the want of her guidance more, as you advance towards the busy season of life, than in the helpless period of childhood. I will therefore endeavour to set before you some of those precepts, by which she formed a character of no ordinary worth and excellence. She was, in the strictest sense of the word, a *Christian*, and she expressed in her dying moments, a perfect resignation to the will of Him, who had seen fit to deprive you of a monitor, at the most critical season of life. "My friend," said she to me, while her countenance already partook of the seraphic expression of the disembodied saints—"my friend, to human wisdom it might seem strange, that my child should be left alone, when she will most need a mother's care; but to me, nothing is strange, that divine wisdom sees fit to dictate.

Since it is His will, I leave her apparently without protection, secure in that unseen mercy that hovers over the forlorn and destitute. I waste not a conjecture on her probable destiny. I have too long trusted my Heavenly Parent, to need further assurances of his unchangeable goodness. My child is as safe under his protection, as if hosts of friends and kindred were contending for the office of befriending the orphan, when her mother shall have entered into heavenly rest."—Never did I see a more beautiful exemplification of the promise which she repeated with a smile of rapture, as she breathed her last sigh—"I will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on me." Yes, my dear Mary, these were the last words of your sainted parent; and it is my earnest prayer, that you may be enabled to bind them as a talisman to your heart, and make them the law of your future life. Since, then, it has pleased a being of infinite mercy, to remove your protectress from you, it becomes your duty, or rather I will term it your privilege, to receive the full assurance, that he will supply her place to you, in such a time and manner as he may deem expedient.

You are not desolate, for Omnipotence itself is pledged to protect you, and you have only to stand still, and see the salvation of God. Let me entreat you, then, to begin in the vernal season of life, to lay up stores for the future. Faith, which is the fundamental requisite of true religion, grows and strengthens gradually where it receives careful culture; but it requires the utmost vigilance, and the most unceasing attention, to nurture this essential grace, in a soil so repugnant to its growth as the human heart. You have already professed Christianity, and surrendered your young heart to its lawful possessor. This is one of the blessed results of a religious education. But you have not now an evangelical guide to pioneer the way for you, through the opening labyrinth of human life. Much of your success in avoiding the evils which abound in this region, will depend upon the

degree of faith, which actuates your reliance upon heavenly goodness. Many persons talk of their faith with complacency, when its utmost extent is to elicit a belief in the historical account of the Redeemer's birth, life, sufferings, and death. But as for the faith which "purifies the heart, works by love, and overcomes the world"—they know it not, neither do they feel their deficiency. This faith, however, is indispensable to true Christianity. You must not only believe, but you must love the doctrines of our holy religion, or its ways are not pleasant, or its paths peaceful. Unless you make the laws of Christ your ruling principles of action, you will rise but slowly in Christian attainments. Many professors do not even pretend to walk humbly with God, or to keep themselves unspotted from the world. They keep up external appearances, and attend sedulously to forms; but there is little of the vital spirit of Christianity in these observances. The heart is still unchanged, and under the direction of carnal motives. How few among these nominal Christians, actually believe in the work of the Holy Spirit! And yet they talk volubly of their faith, as if to make up for the deficiency within, by a redundance of words. But true religion is an internal principle. It rules the heart, and sends out from that seat of life and thought, the impulses which direct the conduct. Our faith is sent to us from heaven, as a messenger of love, to prepare us for ascending to those blissful realms, when the disembodied spirit is free from its tabernacle of dust.

God himself is the author of Christianity. He foretold it from the time when the penalty of their transgression fell upon our first parents. For upwards of four thousand years, the world was in expectation of the coming Messiah, who at length appeared in fulfilment of prophecy, and confirmed his mission by miracles and signs, which continued until the establishment of his doctrines among men. These doctrines are pure from that alloy which attends the best works of

imperfect human wisdom : they are perfectly consistent, and beautifully sublime ! One decisive proof of their divine origin is, that when once the mind of man is brought to study and comprehend them, it rests fully satisfied with their fitness and sufficiency. The precepts of this religion are holy and just, and its laws were ratified by the blood of its author. The worship of Christ as a saviour, is a spiritual worship. His service is rational, and rendered practicable by the helps that it affords to human weakness. This religion was not introduced by power ; for it was the object and aim of power to overthrow it. The world did not establish it ; for it was the declared enemy of the world,—it despised its maxims, and condemned its enjoyments as vain and empty. Christianity is not merely a rule of life, though it presents the most perfect rule that the world ever knew. Had mankind been in a state of innocence, such a rule would have sufficed ; but fallen creatures must have something besides the law which they have violated, to subject them to restraint. The gospel, therefore, does not afford a law for the innocent, but a means of salvation for the guilty. It is suited to the exigencies of man in his fallen state ; not to the requisitions of a guiltless and upright race of creatures. The law is already violated. The gospel brings salvation to those who have been guilty of this violation. It follows of course, that no mere system of forms, adopted from human motives, can reinstate a fallen race in their primitive innocence. The religion which suits our necessities, must be one which transforms the soul into the image of its author, and makes us like minded with our great pattern. In short, the *heart*, that is, the thinking and feeling principle within us, must be changed ; and nothing short of omnipotent power can effect this miracle. It must be clearly understood, that the change is to be radical ; the heart is not improved, or added to, or new modified, but *changed* ; old things must pass away, and all things become

new. According to the emphatic language of Scripture, man must be born again. Surely this term would not be used to imply an ordinary alteration of feeling or sentiment. Some weak believers reject the expression, because they say it means an impossible thing. But cannot the same Spirit, which moved upon the face of the waters in the creation of the world, move within the human heart, so as to bring order out of chaos, and light out of darkness? And how can that thing be pronounced impossible, which happens every day among the children of men? Man becomes a new creature, by a total change in his will, his wishes, his hopes, his actions. His will is brought into conformity with that of his Heavenly Father. His wishes tend towards holy things. His hopes soar to heaven. His actions are dictated by a just and upright law, which is the governing impulse of his renewed heart. What can be greater than the difference between this man, and the same being who once followed blindly the dictates of his own corrupt inclinations, desired only carnal things, never thought of heaven, and acted according to his own vile, earthly desires. It is plain, therefore, that the expression, "a new creature," is not figurative or hyperbolical, but literal,—man is born again of the Spirit, and becomes "a new creature." True religion, when it is attained, soon proves itself by its fruits. God is not recognised as an old master, but received by an entire dedication to his service, as a new one. The homage rendered to him is not external, but consists in an inward devotedness to his will. Man is in a new state—a new condition. Instead of following the world, he is to abjure it; for as Christ overcame the world himself, he expects his disciples to obtain the same victory, and he has promised them strength sufficient for the undertaking. It would not have been worth the Redeemer's while to have suffered and died for us, if he was only to procure us the meagre advantages resulting from a few forms and ordinances. But he came to teach us precepts,

which were illustrated by his own example, confirmed to us by his death, and fully consummated by his resurrection.

It is a melancholy truth, that we see few instances of vital religion in full exercise, among men. But this deficiency is not occasioned by any imperfection in the principle itself: it arises from the imperfect manner in which it is applied. The task is difficult, and is therefore negligently performed. Those who strive after true holiness of life, are represented as enthusiasts, whose example may not, and should not be emulated.

Another stumbling block to faith, is the difficulty of admitting the doctrine of total depravity. Yet it is certain, that Christianity can be based on no other doctrine. If man is not corrupt by nature, he cannot require entire regeneration. But, my dear girl, if you search your own heart faithfully, young as it is, you will find the germ of human corruption at its core. Man is not an imperfect, but a *fallen* creature; and unless he admits religion as a rectifying principle, the disorders incident to his natural state, will gradually work out his destruction. You must therefore believe implicitly that you are a sinner, or you cannot receive Christ as your Saviour. He does not undertake to reform, but to renew your heart. Many people think they will do very well, with a little amendment here and there, while they imagine some parts of their old character are worth retaining. These cannot surely expect to have the Redeemer as an aid in these works of supererogation. There is no promise in Scripture, from which they can derive such an expectation. Thus it is, that so many persons who call themselves Christians, are disappointed in their hopes of amendment. They go to work in a wrong manner, and do not begin at the beginning. Is not it a palpable incongruity to suppose, that he who came to save that which was lost, should set about such a work by finishing what nature has begun? You will, perhaps, meet with people who will tell you, that it is im-

peaching the mercy of God, to suppose that the beings created by himself, should be depraved. I have heard this argument loudly maintained by people, who have declared, that man had far more good than evil in his nature. But, alas ! this error is not of long continuance. Those who deny the doctrine of total depravity, cast away the brightest example of the mercy of God. They do not behold him as we do, wonderfully preparing a system of salvation for guilty rebels, which shall redeem them from everlasting punishment, without compromising his own truth and justice. This is indeed transcendent mercy ! The continuance of favour to those who have not erred, is justice—not mercy. But the pardon of guilty man, and the gift of love which accompanies that pardon, is indeed angelic, heavenly, God-like mercy. Angels themselves have not received such a boon. They do not, in their bright mansions above, owe half such a debt of gratitude to their sovereign, as the poor frail beings who grope in darkness, in the dust of the earth !

I will here conclude this long epistle, my dear Mary, hoping that neither its length nor its subject will deter you from a careful perusal of its contents.

Believe me truly yours.

LETTER II.

Piety Indispensable to Females.

MY DEAR MARY,

In my first letter, I have explained to you the extreme importance of religion to mankind collectively; I will now proceed to examine this divine principle, as it applies to the exigencies of the female sex. Women without religion are to be found in every rank and station of society, and like most other familiar objects, they pass before our eyes with-

out notice or commentary. It is only when human nature is scanned closely and strictly, that we become aware of the secret sources of human strength or weakness. It is only when we have learned to penetrate the *motives* of action, that we can truly estimate the characters which are daily enacting their several parts in the drama of life before our eyes. When religion, the mightiest of all human attainments, becomes the moving principle of the mind, as well as the ruling impulse of the heart, a change comes over the nature of man which effaces the impress of sordid mortality stamped upon the fallen creature, and replaces that fearful token by the seal of spiritual existence. It is then, that the purified heart sends forth motives somewhat worthy of immortal beings. Woman, the *softest* and the *weakest* portion of the majestic species of man, becomes more easily and more thoroughly imbued with this spiritual essence. Her actions show forth spontaneously the principle she has attained; and perhaps the purest, if not the most substantial fruits of regeneration, spring from the ductile nature of the weaker sex.

Religion if not most manifest in feminine deportment, is at least most necessary to enable women to perform their allotted duties in life. The very nature of those duties demands the strength of Christian principle to ensure their correct and dignified performance; while the nature of female trials, requires all the meliorating power of faith, to induce a requisite measure of patience and fortitude. Pride, it is true, sometimes instigates a show of patient sufferance, while the heart is riven with its own secret conflicts. How often do we witness the gradual decay of females who are extolled for their fortitude in affliction. Their minds, unsupported by religion, struggle painfully to maintain outward equanimity, while the inward canker is destroying slowly but certainly, the very germ of vitality. But when the truly feminine character, formed in gentleness, and

nerved by Christian faith to suffer the will of her Father, bows her head with meekness to his dispensations, she presents a picture, the moral sublimity of which is unequalled. Woman without religion is a solecism in morals, a deformity in social life. She resembles the dead oak to which the verdant ivy still gives the appearance of freshness, as it twines its flexible branches around the withered stem. The unpractised eye mistakes the rich foliage of the vine, for the appropriate tokens of vitality in the tree to which it clings. There is life indeed, but it is not where life would be useful and dignified; it is only a growth of frivolous and unprofitable decoration. Woman may look attractive at a distance, as if all her characteristic requisites were in full vigour; but approach her nearly, and you see a redundancy of ornamental qualities, covering, like the unsubstantial ivy, the sapless trunk, from which emanates no one substantial good; for the principle of life is wanting. Nay, I fear this similitude may be carried still further; for the ornamental qualities of irreligious females, too often resemble the ivy in its poisonous qualities. Those who unwarily come in contact with either, may have cause to rue an over hasty estimate of external advantages.

It is no derogation from the dignity or utility of woman, to declare that she is inferior to man in moral as well as in physical strength. She has a different part to act, and therefore she requires different qualities from the being who has been pronounced her superior by the Almighty himself. Woman was created avowedly to be the helpmeet, not the ruler, nor yet the equal of man. Providence has allotted her certain requisites for this station, which it should be the object of education to strengthen and mature. It is much to be regretted that custom should ever have been permitted to violate this wise and merciful allotment of the Most High, even *experimentally*. A condition, just subordinate to that of man, is replete with usefulness and consistency;

whereas in attempting to elevate the weaker sex to a station which demands masculine strength, national as well as individual misery have been produced. Look at the result of a similar experiment in France before the revolution. It was then said that women had attained their true and legitimate station of equality. Great expectations were entertained from this unnatural and unholy exaltation of one half the human species, above their proper level in society. Women forsook their homes, for the strange and unhallowed pursuits of politics and intrigues of state. They fulminated strange doctrines in the forum, while those sweet and sacred duties so peculiarly feminine, were either wholly neglected, or consigned to cold hearts and strange hands. They exchanged the smiles of infancy and the prattle of childhood, the purest of earthly things, for the fierce turmoil and withering excitement of political debate. Whilst they emulated masculine supremacy, their children were corrupted by dissolute menials, their domestic hearths forsaken, and the social compact gradually dissolved! What were the consequences of this daring innovation of divinely established order? Such as blacken the page of history, and startle the thoughtful mind, even in another age and region. Woman, whose most endearing qualities are nurtured in the sacredness of domestic privacy, was seduced from her home of peace, and sphere of unostentatious duties, and exhibited to the contaminating gaze of a lawless multitude, not to soothe the wild fervour of unnatural excitement, but to increase the madness of the populace by her infuriated declamation. Instead of quenching the deadly flame of popular frenzy, she was made to hold the torch to the funeral pile of national prosperity. May the world never again behold such an example of perverted talents, and misguided energy.

I know, my dear girl, that I am in danger of encountering a host of female prejudices, when I venture unequivocally

to recommend the doctrine of conjugal obedience even to those who have been told by the Almighty himself, that their husbands shall have rule over them. This is somewhat strange and contradictory! that even professors of religion should shrink from a gospel injunction, so plainly expressed as to admit of but one interpretation. Human ingenuity can devise no evasion of such an imperative mandate; but Christian submission can suggest many sweet and sacred palliatives for what is rather an apparent than a real evil. Power, my dear Mary, is one of the Molochs of this world, and those who covet even a legitimate portion of it, will be found to have taken a canker to their bosoms, when they sought only to gather a blameless rose. The little that falls to woman's lot in her appropriate sphere of domestic superintendence, is often sufficient to overburden both her heart and mind. It should never be forgotten that the first of her species fell into the snares of the destroyer by coveting that which almighty wisdom had denied her. Had Eve been content with her allotted portion of the blessings of a sinless state, she might have saved herself and descendants the immitigable woes of their present condition. But as the first woman was too weak to resist temptation, I fear the disasters introduced by her dereliction of duty, have rendered the sex still more fragile. They have undoubtedly drawn upon themselves many penalties, like their original mother, by coveting what providence never intended them to possess.

Is it not time then, my dear Mary, for our ill-fated sex to beware of those frailties which have already produced such manifold evils? Does not true wisdom, as well as true piety, dictate a *circumstantial* obedience to the will of God as revealed in his holy book? A French writer has beautifully complimented the sex, by designating them as that part of the creation without which, the morning of life would be destitute of succour, the noon without pleasure,

and the evening without consolation. Surely this says enough even for those who are most covetous of praise!

But in our happy country, there is at present little danger of any overt violation of feminine propriety. The sex are, it is true, somewhat endangered from other sources of temptation, however; and I would fain put them on their guard against all imaginable evils. Fashion, that Juggernaut of great cities, misleads many of his thoughtless votaries from the sweet path of duty and of safety. How many victims are yearly crushed beneath the ponderous wheels of his triumphal car! Alas, the various signs of this senseless idolatry pervade every class of females! Age is not exempt from the awful taint of this soul-wasting folly. Youth often carries the tokens of its disastrous influence to a premature grave. How I must ever wonder at the perversion of taste, not to say of principle, which leads so many women to burst on the startled eye, in all the elaborate decorations sanctioned by fashion. When I see delicate females staggering under an immense superstructure of gauze and wire, with vast convolutions of many coloured ribbons, wrapped in gaudy folds around a huge fabric, equally removed from beauty and usefulness, I sigh for the stigma too sure to be attached to the unlucky wearers. When I see evident marks of the violence done to nature in repressing the exuberance of youthful fulness, and watch the gradual waning of the hues of health, once so redundant; with these decisive tokens of the victory accorded to fashion, before my eye, and the shrunken form, completely subdued to the prescribed standard by unnatural restriction, I sigh still more deeply.

All these expedients to attract notoriety are unworthy of the female character. Women should shrink from the public gaze, like the meek-eyed violet, and shed the incense of their good works around, so as to mark the spot where they bloom, in lowly retirement. These are far more attractive to the moral sense, as well as to refined taste,

than the gay, gaudy frequenters of public amusements. As some delicate hues fade in the sun, so do genuine female attractions lose their lustre, when exposed to the glare of publicity. The unchecked gaze of the world tarnishes, like the meridian beam of a summer sun: she who has stood before it, unabashed, has lost the freshness and delicacy of feminine loveliness. It is far better that woman should be sought in that retirement where her virtues are perfected, than that she should be found in some conspicuous situation, where the roving eye is attracted by the blaze of her outward adornments. Meekness is not only an appropriate feminine attribute, but a fundamental virtue of the female character. Is it not strange, my dear Mary, that young women who profess to receive the Scripture as the best moral code, and to reverence it as the revealed will of God, should yet violate its emphatic injunctions. How little heed is given to the apostle's beautiful directions for female apparel, by the very followers of gospel wisdom and truth? Read them often yourself, my dear girl, that there may be at least one woman adorned according to the genuine taste and propriety of scripture fashion.

I have been led to make these remarks, by a specimen lately exhibited to me of an ultra fashionable female, whom I will attempt to describe for your amusement.

Felicia was born of wealthy parents, who gave her a showy and expensive education. From her infancy she was instructed in those accomplishments which serve best for exhibition. Her mind was cultivated only in its most brilliant qualities; every *plebeian* attainment was carefully avoided, while fashion was sedulously inculcated as the first requisite to female elegance—to move gracefully in a crowd—to dance with pre-eminent effect before hundreds—to converse with unabashed ease on every subject, and in every possible situation—to assume the first place in all company, and act as if not doubting that every one awarded

the distinction to her—to exhibit her whole circle of accomplishments with ceaseless diligence, and to think all time lost that was not spent in actual display, or in preparing for exhibition.

Such was the education bestowed on Felicia, and you will not think that I was surprised at its results. I found her a thing of art, as far as artificial and affected manners could merit such a term. She would have been handsome, had not her demeanour claimed even more admiration than she could elicit. She might have conversed agreeably, but her talents were too showy to be pleasing, and her information so decidedly selected for effect, that it failed to produce any. In short, she showed the capacity of being attractive, without exciting any feeling but that of compassion from an audience whom she expected confidently to dazzle.

Adieu, for the present, my dear M.

LETTER III.

Female Piety exemplified in the characters of a Mother and Daughter.

MY DEAR MARY,

Since I wrote last, both my feelings and taste have been accidentally gratified, by a call at the house of a lady, whom I shall call Emilia. She is a widow, who has devoted herself to the education of an only daughter. When I arrived at the house, the friend who had insisted on procuring me the pleasure of an introduction, politely requested permission to make me known to Emilia. She received me with dignified ease, and soon gave me that pleasant sensation, which arises from social intercourse among the true followers of

the Redeemer: I fell into that sweet home feeling, which opens all the sluices of human affection.

Emilia spoke of her daughter, as the friend and companion from whose society she derived the greatest portion of her happiness. While she was speaking with kindling features, the subject of her discourse entered the room, having just returned from visiting a sick neighbour. "This is my daughter Emma," said Emilia, with an illuminated smile. —My eyes fell upon a youthful form, of graceful size and proportions, plainly apparelled, and without the slightest approach to artifice in her demeanour. Her features at first appeared plain, but a smile diffused over them an irresistible attraction. She was grave, however, and her countenance exhibited traces of recent emotion. She entered into easy conversation, carefully falling into the subject selected by her mother, without showing any desire to dictate one of her own. In the course of a long morning's discourse, she developed rich stores of intellectual wealth, but showed no consciousness of the impression she was making on her auditors. I exerted all my skill to draw her out, without betraying my design, and succeeded in fathoming a mind of no ordinary depth. The stream of literature had passed over this mind, fertilizing the soil, without leaving any pool for learning to stagnate in. There was moral beauty and grace in her conceptions, while her thoughts flowed with a freedom that betokened no small share of variety in her mental treasures. Her moral sense appeared pure from the slightest taint of worldly conformity. She had evidently taken, at the age of seventeen, that good part which was not to be taken from her; and her thoughts were exalted far beyond the impurities of earth. She seemed to pant after opportunities to serve God, and yet to wait patiently his own time, to call her forth in his service. The truths of Christianity had been cemented with the fabric of her being, so that out of Christ, she was nothing. All her energies

were directed to his cause; but they had evidently³ been hitherto employed in meliorating the condition of her own heart. When she spoke of human depravity, you clearly saw, that her own bosom had furnished sufficient evidences of this fundamental doctrine of Scripture. Some people talk awkwardly of sin, as if they would fain apply their ideas to the world, and not to themselves. But Emma drew her picture of innate depravity from self conviction, and all her arguments were practically deduced from self examination. While she proved that man was by nature sinful, she proved that grace could renew a right spirit within him. There was a sweet persuasiveness in her language, that seemed calculated to win souls to the Saviour. Her mother evidently delighted in hearing her speak, and seemed to draw her out more for her own gratification, than for the purposes of display. Emma never spoke, until she found that Emilia had chosen silence as her part.

When the dinner hour approached, both mother and daughter quitted the room, "on hospitable thoughts intent," like our first mother. My companion took this opportunity to point out to me, several lady-like works which adorned the apartment. There were some beautiful landscapes finished with taste and skill, and evidently taken from nature. An oil painting of the parting of Hector and Andromache, displayed uncommon excellence in the art, but my friend informed me that Emma had applied herself to this branch of painting a few years ago, when her mother's pecuniary circumstances were embarrassed. "She then taught painting, by way of increasing her mother's income," said she, "and when their difficulties were removed, she gave up this arduous undertaking; at present she rarely has recourse to her pencil, except to add to the funds of the Theological Education Society." There were musical instruments also in the apartment, and my companion assured me that Emma touched them with skill and taste. "This accomplishment,"

added she, "she learnt in compliance with her father's desire; he languished many years in great bodily suffering, and music was one of his principal gratifications."

As the dinner hour drew near, our party received an agreeable accession from the entrance of the minister of the parish. He soon told us that he had been detained at the house of the same old neighbour, to whom Emma had paid her morning visit. "She has taken her departure for a better world," said he, "and O, what a blessed frame has she departed in! She blessed you, Miss Emma, with her parting breath, and declared that she owed her conversion from a state of heathen darkness, to your unwearied labours. 'Oh!' exclaimed she, 'had she left me in my obstinate blindness, where now would have been my hopes? But she came again and again, in faithful imitation of him, who went about doing good! She read the Scriptures and pointed out their meaning, with benign goodness and perseverance, until a blessing came from heaven upon her labours. Yes! I verily believe that my soul was granted to her prayers.' " The tears stood in Emma's eyes, as she listened to this recital.—"I did but little for her," said she in a quivering voice. "I only read to her, and explained my own views of Christianity. This appeared to me to be one of my most simple duties: had I omitted it, my conscience would not have suffered me to rest. Besides, I find myself so much edified by attempting to instruct others, that this was not altogether a disinterested duty."

"To you, Miss Emma," said the good minister, "it is more than a duty,—it is a privilege. I would not speak thus to your face, did I not know that you cannot be hurt by a little honest praise. It is only those who prize encomiums, that are hurt by them. You have higher motives of action, and cannot be injured by an assurance that you have done good in your vocation."

The eyes of Emilia glistened at this sincere and merited eulogium on her daughter. I could see that she prized it far more than she could have done personal praise. The evening past in social enjoyment, and I learnt yet more of the excellencies of both mother and daughter. It is Emilia's rule always to adhere to strict moral and religious propriety in her conversation. She keeps the spirit of religion always in operation, so as to pervade whatever subject she or her guests may wish to discuss. If the name is not mentioned, the essence of christianity is present in all her avocations and amusements; it sheds a halo light around the social circle. When night arrived, and the supper things were removed, the room was prepared for family worship; the servants entered, all comfortably and decently clad, with an air of respectful attention, that was infinitely pleasing. I was afterwards told that they were all instructed in the principles of christianity, and most of them professors of some standing. Emma teaches them all to read, and explains their christian duties to them; so that in obeying their heavenly Master, they perform all subordinate duties. "When we teach our servants to serve God," says Emilia, "they serve us of course, for obedience to their earthly master is one branch of their duty to their heavenly King." It is always better to give both children and servants a higher motive of action than mere subservience to our will. When this duty is involved in a more exalted one, there is a greater prospect of its being duly performed. I have never seen slaves look as they do in Emilia's family; and I am told, that she has the most moral and correct set in the country. This surely proves the propriety of her management, for I have often seen, in the houses of professors, miserable examples of ignorance and vice among their slaves, while incessant complaints of their ill conduct made up the sum of social discourse. It is, doubtless, an arduous part of christian duty,

to train this unfortunate class of our fellow beings in the way they should go; but it certainly must be *a part of christian duty*, and yet how seldom is it ever undertaken in any way! We hear complaints of our national misfortune, but see no efforts made to meliorate our condition. Surely religion demands and suggests some exertions in this obvious and imperious department of social duty. Emilia has among her dependants some characters who would not disgrace the higher walks of life. When she is questioned on the subject, she says, that she became aware early in life, that the ordinary behaviour of these people would destroy her happiness. She therefore set herself to arranging a method of management, which would have a tendency to remove these evils. "This method," said she, "I digested prayerfully, and if I have succeeded in enforcing it, the Lord has been pleased to bless my supplications, for I always knew the work was too great for my feeble powers to accomplish, and I have left it to Him who does all difficult things for his creatures. I never omit to pray that God may give me good servants."

This method of obtaining so essential a blessing, struck me as being dictated by an unusual degree of faith; and, indeed, every thing I saw at Emilia's house, convinced me of the efficacy of this divine principle, when in full operation. Both mother and daughter impute every blessing to omnipotent goodness. They have encountered many troubles, the recollection of which seems to add to their present thankful enjoyment of prosperity. Early in the morning I rose and looked from my window, when, to my surprise, I saw Emma, enveloped in a cloak, coming into the house through a side door. A servant entering soon after, I mentioned what I had seen, and inquired the meaning of it. "Miss Emma sat up last night," answered he, "with the dead body of the poor woman who died yesterday. The family were all broke down with fatigue in attending on her last illness, and her daughter, who is

very delicate, was going to set up herself, but Miss Emma would not suffer her, so she went over last night after prayers, and returned by day this morning to get some rest before morning worship." Accordingly the benevolent Emma appeared soon after I entered the drawing room. She looked pale, but made no complaints; on the contrary, her manner was unusually cheerful; doubtless from the prevalence of that spirit within her, which prompts deeds of self-denial. I could not but amuse my secret thoughts with drawing up a contrast between Emma and Felicia, which was strongest precisely at that point of time; for I remembered calling at noon, after a ball, upon Felicia, and being told by her mother, that she had not yet left her bed. "She is such a dancer," said the mother with a complacent smile, "that she gets fatigued to death at balls. Every body of any note must dance with her, and she comes home half dead from every dancing party. Its at least a week before she can walk straight, and I promise you she is cross enough at such seasons." This account was given without a suspicion that it could make an unfavourable impression upon me.

Let me entreat you, my dear Mary, to compare these two characters carefully, and tell me which of the two you wish to resemble? I know that both your principles and taste will lead you to make a right choice. But I am far from wishing to confine you to an earthly model, when you have the fulness of perfection set before you, in Him who has commanded you to be perfect, even as he is perfect. Yet I do not at all approve the sentiment which is often exculpated by those who choose to entertain it, namely, that it is wrong to look at any character with the desire of imitation. If you see before you an example of practical excellence, it may save you the labour of embodying in your own mind the virtues to be copied. When you see, not only *what* good things may be done, but also *how* they

are done, you may set about them with greater confidence of success. The next letter I address you, shall comprehend charity as a practical virtue. May the grace of God incline you fully to understand and practise it.

Ever yours.

LETTER IV.

Definition of Charity.

MY DEAR MARY,

It has been said of women, that the natural tenderness of their hearts disposes them to practise without difficulty, the duties of charity. I grant that some of the requisites of this essential christian grace, may be prompted by feminine softness, but there are others which require firmness and magnanimity, such as rarely fall to the lot of women. Take the apostle's definition along with you, and you will soon comprehend my meaning. "*Charity suffereth long, and is kind—charity envieth not—charity vaunteth not herself—is not puffed up—doth not behave itself unseemly—seeketh not her own—is not easily provoked—thinketh no evil—rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth—beareth all things—believeth all things—hopeth all things—endureth all things.*" This is, indeed, a comprehensive grace, and one who can fully practise all its requisitions, must be nearer the image of Christ than a superficial observer would suppose.

In the first place, charity *suffereth long*. Can you, my dear girl, ever hope to arrive at constancy in suffering? Can you endure the persecution which I know you undergo from some who call themselves your friends? Do you never

forget the gentleness and equanimity that such a case calls for? Do you not only endure outwardly, but is your inward aspiration, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do?" Do you cheerfully perform offices of kindness to your persecutors? Do you never feel uneasy when you view the superior attainments of others, so as to be restless and discontented under their superiority? Do you, on the contrary, look up to them with cordial approbation and admiration, loving the virtues which they practise, and being content to feel your own inferiority?—then you have the charity which envieth not. Are you content that your good works should be seen by God alone? Are you never anxious to bring to light any favourite action, which might redound to your praise? Do you labour for the glory of God alone; and is your heart so full of this object, that your own profit, honour, or praise, never conflicts with holier feelings?—then your charity vaunteth not itself. Do you feel humbled by a consciousness that you serve your Master negligently, and in small measure, even when most engaged in his cause? Are you deeply abased when you discover in your heart a feeling of self-complacency under your good works?—then your charity is not puffed up. If we feel rightly, our utmost exertions must fall immeasurably short of our desires, so that we never can think we have done enough, where so much remains undone. Charity is always meek, and does not fall into unseemly fits of passion or impatience. Charity does not admit of a boisterous assumption of rights, but rather yields what is really her due, than assumes all that can justly be claimed. Charity is *patient*. No excess of persecution or extremity of malice can provoke wrath in the mind of a truly patient person. Charity *thinketh no evil*. Behold the climax of this christian grace. It banishes suspicion. It induces kindly feelings, and favourable judgments. Instead of impeaching the conduct of others, it supposes

that all things are right while they appear so. If equivocal circumstances lead the mind to suspicion, still charity thinketh no evil! It rejoices when truth prevails, and delights to see mankind under its influence. Instead of being pleased with the backslidings of fellow professors, charity mourns at every token of delinquency; grieves over each instance of spiritual declension, and rejoices when righteousness and truth actuate the conduct of the people of God. This virtue, when thus practised, comprehends much of the sublime and beautiful of christian excellence. Emilia lately disclosed an instance of her daughter's steadfastness in the faith, which was truly pleasing. There was a young person, who had manifested considerable jealousy of Emma's success in life. She was a near relation, and a fellow labourer in the good cause, though with motives far less pure than those which actuated the zealous christian. This person disturbed the meek and benign Emma, in every plan which her charity could suggest. By open rudeness, or secret thwartings, she impeded many of her operations. Emma pursued her course steadily; where she was stopped in one path of duty, she turned without murmuring to another. In vain did injudicious friends point out to her with amplification, the errors of her relative. With a charity determined not to think evil, or rejoice in iniquity, she went on her course with caution and prudence, avoiding all collision as much as possible, and yielding the palm to her envious friend whenever she could. There was to be a meeting of a sewing society, and Emma heard that her opponent was determined to do something mortifying to her on the occasion. She did not throw herself into an attitude of defiance, but prayed fervently that she might be guided aright in her conduct at this crisis. She meekly bent to the storm, and gave up all that was required; cheerfully taking a subordinate situation, and making herself happy and active. This conduct disarmed

malice. She enjoyed the triumph of overcoming evil with good ; and finally brought her half-hearted relative to embrace religion firmly and consistently. Many have been the triumphs of her upright spirit over malice and envy. At present she enjoys the happiness of being at peace with all her fellow-labourers, and having their confidence in a high degree. Emma was once advised not to admit a captious, cavilling person, into some benevolent association in which she was engaged. Her answer was, "I believe she is sincere, and why should we deny her the opportunity of amendment. If she comes among us, we will pray for her, and endeavour to lead her aright ; we ought not to refuse even the little that she can do, where so much is requisite to ensure success. Let us determine to bear with her ; if we cannot teach her any good thing, she can teach us patience, which is a lovely christian grace." In fact, the lady in question was entirely reformed, and became a useful member of the association.

It is melancholy to reflect, that good works cannot be carried on in the social circle, without being impeded by the leaven of human corruption. How often do we see much energy wasted in fruitless efforts, because the spirit of discord prevails, either openly, or in secret. The superficial observer wonders that a blessing does not attend such active exertions ; but the omniscient eye sees the impediment at the very core of those hearts, which seek in vain to cover up their carnal motives, instead of labouring to cast them out. God will not prosper endeavours that are polluted by emulation or envy. The true christian never thinks he can do enough in his Master's cause. His eye is always fixed on the aggregate sum of good works. If much has been done, he rejoices, even when he knows that but a trifling portion of the good was wrought by himself. It is enough for him, that the cause is prospering. His heart rejoices in the piety and zeal of others, and he is willing to follow at an humble dis-

tance, if his gifts are small, or his opportunities rare. But many persons undertake good works with another spirit. They long to make themselves conspicuous, and to have great praise for their good deeds. Verily, they have their reward in the breath of man's nostrils. They press forward, and gather fame as they go, disputing at every step with their fellow labourers. If they meet with any one whose attainments are undoubtedly superior to theirs, they shrink back, and will not unite with those who can eclipse them. This is done too, with an air of mock-humility, as if they really thought their own gifts contemptible. But the Lord knoweth their hearts. He reads inordinate self-estimation at the bottom of them, and turns away with disgust from their empty professions. Why did the man who had but one talent, refuse to put it to interest? Undoubtedly because he envied him who had ten, and thought his own chance of profit too small to be regarded.

One would think, that even carnal wisdom would suggest to him who has but slender gifts, that his responsibility is less, and his chance of escaping envy and malice, greater, than if he was more conspicuously endowed. Those, whose high intellectual endowments force them into responsible stations, are fully sensible of the disadvantages accruing to them. They would willingly hide their heads from the storm that envy and malice raise with their tainted breath, against the highly gifted of all denominations. Notoriety has its accompanying evils, whatever the ambitious may think, when they envy those who have made greater attainments than themselves. God's people must endure this evil if called forth in his service before the public eye, but they certainly do not esteem it among their privileges. While the ambitious aspirant is aiming at notoriety, the humble christian "does good by stealth, and blushes to find it fame." I have known charitable associations so disturbed by a spirit of rivalry, as to be rendered almost nugatory.

I trust, my dear girl, that you will never suffer carnal motives to mingle with your active exercises in the cause of religion. I once knew a flourishing Sabbath School nearly broken up, by the rivalry of its two heads; both were struggling for supremacy, and neither would yield an iota to the other, for the sake of the cause they professed to uphold. Another school was seriously injured by the jealousy of the female superintendent, who conceived that one of the teachers was more popular than herself, and never was at rest, until she succeeded in turning her out.

I could name other similar cases, but these few will suffice for warnings, and the subject is too painful to dwell upon. Those who have the glory of God at heart, will bear and forbear for his sake; knowing that he appreciates the inward motives of the heart, and not the outward seeming of such as call themselves by his name. Many of our keenest trials, arise from the conflicting tastes and inclinations of our associates. Were it not for such lessons as these, we should have no opportunity of acquiring patience and forbearance, two of the most precious Christian virtues. If you have only to yield to those, who in their turn yield to you, your task is easy; but if, when you have practised self denial to the utmost length of your patience, you still find yourself pressed upon, there is real merit in forbearing. All our virtues are strengthened by exercise, and we are so little practised in self-imposed restraints, that it is well for us when our Heavenly Father sends occasions of discipline to us. We are always children in his sight, and require the same restrictions that we are wont to impose upon our own offspring. We are apt to have by nature, an overweening sense of our own importance, which is too often strengthened and magnified by the conversation we hear in the social circle, from the earliest period of childhood. There is generally some little bickering among our connexions—some small occasion of heart burning,—which we hear discussed

at large, with animadversions on the conduct of others, pretty highly seasoned with inflammable ingredients. From these occurrences we learn a good deal of the *dignity of human nature*, and the requisite degree of retaliation admissible in civil society. Pride is thus insensibly nurtured in the young heart, to a degree that afterwards proves troublesome. We retain a confused notion, that resistance to aggression is allowable, if not praiseworthy. "Nobody *ought* to bear so much—I declare, it is mean spirited—it is cowardly ;—every one ought to cultivate *proper* pride." This jargon confounds the minds of children, and they grow up with undefined ideas, that *pride* is sometimes *proper*. Not being furnished with an exact estimate of the legitimate quantity, necessary to maintain the dignity of one's character, of course, this allotment is left to the individual, who measures the degree of *proper pride* by his own ideas of *propriety*: just as much as he feels inclined to indulge, is, in his opinion, the *proper* quantity.

But I might pursue this subject until I wearied you, dear Mary, and I only wish to put you on your guard against the too common mistakes of the age in which you live. There can be no proper standard for Christian virtue, but the Bible; and just so much pride as that directs you to assume, in your intercourse with your fellow creatures, I will allow you to practise. Self love abounds in subterfuges. Wounded pride generally passes for *sensibility*. But how strangely is this term perverted! Look at that frowning brow; mark those swollen features; what is the source of those gushing tears?—Oh, my sensibility has been deeply wounded—my delicacy is violated—I have been insulted,—strange charges are brought against me, and faults laid at my door that I never heard of before;—but I will resent. Human nature can bear no more; my dignity requires that I should resist such oppression, &c.—Is this *sensibility*?—that feeling which melts at the sorrows of others? Alas, no! it is a vile impostor. It

is alive only to self. A touch wounds its sickly sensitiveness. It is prompt to inflict pain, but shrinks from enduring it. It defends itself before it is attacked, and resents insults before they have been offered. To suspect it of imperfection, is to awaken its violence. How different from the benign grace it would pass for! that gentleness of feeling which emanates from the divine principle of love.

May you, my dear girl, have the true Christian virtue implanted in your renewed heart.

I am ever yours.

LETTER V.

Women Defended from the Charge of Instability.

MY DEAR MARY,

It has been said by writers who have pretended to comprehend the female heart, that "woman is as unstable as water, and therefore cannot excel." It is true that caprice is one of the many foibles belonging to weak people, whatever may be their sex and age; but the fair impartial page of history furnishes examples of exalted fortitude and persevering constancy in strong minded women.

In the first place, I hold education to be as powerful as the fairy spells were anciently supposed to be, in bestowing mental gifts, or, I should rather say, in forming *rational habits*.

It too often happens, since women are admitted to the privilege of education, that some disproportion arises between the different faculties of their minds, in consequence of a defective method of cultivation. One power of the mind certainly may be cultivated at the expense of another; as we see that one muscle or limb may acquire excessive strength or

undue size at the expense of the health of the whole body. This is seldom advantageous either to the individual or to society. It is said, that the inhabitants of the mountainous regions of Switzerland, are vain of an excrescence by which they are deformed; and I have known females in like manner to be vain of exhibiting mental deformities. Caprice has been esteemed a grace in the female character by some unaccountable admirer of mental obliquity. I have known mothers to encourage in their daughters something extremely like thisameleon quality, from an exceeding desire to excite the admiration of nice critics in female character. It does, indeed, seem that there exists an insuperable difficulty in the education of females, and their passage through life, which renders it impossible that their minds should ever acquire that vigour and efficiency which accurate knowledge, and the varied experience of life, alone can give. I allude to the peculiar tastes of those who are appointed as umpires, when the subject of female attractions is under discussion. As long as the *gentlemen* continue to admire frivolity, it will be difficult to establish a rational system of female education. Precisely those qualities which are most unfavourable to feminine consistency and stability, are often the exclusive objects of masculine admiration and applause. This, then, is the true reason why women are deficient in strength of character, and why they afford so few proofs of solid utility. Another cause of this characteristic defect may be, that females are expected to acquire many light and graceful accomplishments, which take up much of the time appropriated to education. Between persons of equal genius and equal industry, time becomes the only measure of their acquirements. Now if you calculate the hours necessary to attain tolerable proficiency in any light accomplishment, and subtract them from the period allotted to female education, you will see plainly, that those who have

most feminine accomplishments, must have been restricted in the opportunity of acquiring solid information.

If we *were* to allow a natural equality between male and female intellect, still the situation of women in society, the short period allotted to education, the light pursuits to which custom and fashion have addicted them, and many other circumstances too tedious to detail, must all concur to prevent their attaining any thing like an equality in solid information.

Besides this, women are necessarily confined to a sort of monotonous seclusion, while men mix with the world without restraint; associating freely with every variety of character, and expatiating on every scene in life which lies open to their view. Thus they acquire a diversity of thought, and a depth of experience in men and things, of which women are wholly destitute. I make these remarks to show the utter futility of aiming at an equality between the sexes, which neither nature nor education have rendered admissible. It is a palpable truism, that no woman can be happy or respectable in society who does not preserve the peculiar virtues of her sex; and it is to be feared that those who emulate the stronger sex in mental attainments, will make shipwreck of their little store of exclusive attractions in the pursuit. Of this, we have had a melancholy proof in Mrs. Wolstonecraft, who rashly endeavoured to break down the barrier which wisdom, as well as custom, has established between the characteristic pursuits of the two sexes.

Superiority of mind must be united with great generosity and good temper, to be endured philosophically by those within its influence. When this superiority is possessed by women over men, the task of endurance has been found still harder. Censure is a tax, too, which even men have imposed on them by the public, when they seek to attain eminence of any sort; and women have a double portion of

this penalty to endure. There are, in short, innumerable reasons why women should be content with a moderate portion of those intellectual attainments, to which the sex have been recently admitted. The deference paid to superiority of intellect in females is withheld, unless that superiority is accompanied by a singular degree of modesty and discretion. Men generally flatter with an equivocal air, when their attention is called to those things. If the acquirement is trifling or frivolous, their flattery is more spontaneous and pleasing. So much depends on the approbation of the stronger sex, that women of cultivated understandings sometimes find themselves but poorly rewarded for their industry in the attainment of knowledge. They meet either with a sneer or an equivocal compliment, and have the mortification of finding that all their trouble has only unfitted them for pleasing those with whom they are to spend their lives. To this is frequently added the poignant mortification of discovering, that some superficial girl, with a few trifling accomplishments, is preferred to them. The fact is, that men are jealous of literary and scientific ladies, and not without cause; for though they have little chance of being surpassed in these attainments, they have a pretty strong one of finding no one to superintend their domestic establishments with skill, or attend properly to the homely minutiae of the household department. This is no inconsiderable evil to a man who has entered into a rational calculation of the true requisites to domestic content. Therefore it is best for women to keep themselves from conflicting with the prejudices of the other sex. It is better to be governed by *weak* reasons, than to be incapable of being restrained by strong ones. Let them cultivate the useful faculties of their minds as much as they can; let them regulate their feelings, subdue their passions, and store their memories with useful, practical facts, such as may be brought forward and interwoven with the ordinary events and

pursuits of life. Elaborate accomplishments are of little use in domestic life; but a taste for music or drawing may be moderately cultivated, and made subservient to purposes of rational amusement. Whatever embellishes life without occupying an undue portion of time or thought, is useful and pleasing. Flowers may be cultivated without neglecting fruits, or the still more important staple commodity of bread.

In forming the female character, there should be an attempt made to assimilate its propensities, as well as its acquisitions, to those of the other sex, that harmony and beauty may be produced by an union of two beings designed for each other.

Until this becomes the specific object of female education, we must not wonder that the conjugal union so often produces dissonance instead of concord. Women must be brought up in a fitness for their conjugal duties. For this purpose, they must be practised in the appropriate graces of the conjugal and maternal character. They must not shrink from obedience, for it is their scriptural duty; from subordination, for it is their safe and proper grade in the scale of social life. Many other requisites may sound harshly to ears unpractised in lessons of sober wisdom; but I am thinking solely of promoting the rational happiness of my sex, not of flattering their vanity, or pampering their pride. Were I to contend for an equality of rights, I am not sure that their happiness would be secured by a full and perfect success; but with a certainty of defeat in so chivalrous an undertaking, I prefer pointing out the best method of using their actual privileges, to instituting an unprofitable contest for doubtful rights. This seems to be the age of experiments in the female department; and I ardently wish to see those experiments founded on reason and traditional experience. Any mistake in such an important matter may have a fatal influence upon human happiness. I

have noticed in my own limited sphere of observation, that those women who have been entrusted with most power over others, have uniformly had least power over themselves. The very process of arranging rules for the government of others, seems to be attended by an unconscious relaxation of the inward discipline of the heart and temper. What is it that makes women sometimes notorious for indulging an irascible humour with their dependants? It is surely the failure of internal control—the want of secret restraint. If you follow the history of female nature as it is recorded in the annals of the world, you will find that female sovereigns have been usually violent and despotic over the domestic circle. Queen Elizabeth boxed the ears of her courtiers in a frenzy of rage, upon the slightest provocation. The unfortunate Mary of Scotland was deficient in self-government, in a point still more dangerous in its effects upon her happiness and respectability. In the august age of Louis XIV., you will find singular examples of the abuse of power in females. The great and good Fenelon was disgraced, because he thwarted the ambition of Madame de Maintenon; and the insane bigotry of the same lady is supposed to have occasioned the revocation of the edict of Nantes. Indeed it will scarcely be too much to assert, that the abuse of power in women has occasioned in many instances the moral and political decline of nations.

But I have allowed myself too much latitude in discussing this subject. The immediate object of my remarks is, to attempt to reconcile the female sex to a subordinate station in the social compact. That is to say, a station where they will be subject to the rule of their legitimate superiors both in moral and physical strength. This subordination is so plainly in consonance with the will of God, that I am surprised to hear it controverted by professors of religion. Woman, in the first place, was created as a sort of appendage to man, and made inferior to him in physical energy, in

consequence of which she was understood to have a claim upon his protection ; in return for this protection, she was to yield him that allegiance which the great law of nature sanctions the strong in exacting from the weak. Again, the transgression of the woman placed her in awful circumstances, as the object of heavenly wrath. This penalty was voluntarily incurred for her sake by the man, who abjured blessings which he might still have retained, rather than separate himself from his heaven-appointed companion. It is, therefore, the obvious duty of woman to compensate to man, as much as possible, for the sacrifices he has made in her behalf ; while her paramount obligations to an offended God, should induce the most perfect submission to his revealed will. It surely is not in *resisting* the adverse circumstances in which we may be placed by Providence, but in *submitting* to them, that true obedience to the Almighty will be found to consist. The proud heart of an assuming, ambitious female, may shrink from the task of obedience to a fellow worm, but it is, nevertheless, an imperative duty of her station, to yield that submission to her legitimate. She may writhe under the yoke of masculine authority, but nature, and the God of nature, have alike fitted it to her neck, and her wisest alternative is patient submission.

The destiny of women is sweetened by many of the choicest mercies of her Creator. It is in her heart that the dove of faith finds rest for the sole of his foot, after he has been poising his weary wing over the turbulent ocean of human passion. It is among her peculiar and appropriate virtues, that religion puts forth its freshest bloom, like the rose of Sharon amid the wildest scenes of sterility. She is happily exempt from the necessity of mingling with the stormy elements which compose general society ; where the turbulence of ambition, or the mad excitement of other raging passions, sets man against his fellow man like the tigers of

the desert. Her's is a sphere where the gentler virtues of humanity may flourish beneath her fostering smile. The most deadly blights to human peace, fall not in their keenest malignity within her appropriate scenes of action. Man himself lays aside his rugged characteristics when he seeks the solace of her society. The fiercest warrior, or the most unrelenting votary of stern ambition, wears a smoother aspect, when a gentle feminine creature, formed after the most perfect model of her sex, crosses his path and scatters roses among the thorns of his appointed track. There is not in nature a more beautiful spectacle, than that of a female, invested with all the purest attractions of her sex, in the act of soothing the toil-worn companion of her destiny, under his characteristic moodiness of humour. When he comes from the troubled scenes of life, with a cloud gathered over his soul, from which the lightnings of human passion flash fiercely, as brooding thought supplies the electric fluid, she is to him like a sunbeam, piercing the dense vapour, and shedding light and beauty over the tempest of his feelings. And yet, my dear Mary, I have known women who forbore to exercise this blessed prerogative of their sex; who imitated the scowl of discontent upon a husband's brow, rather than disperse its gloom by a cheerful greeting.

Some women complain that their husbands come home moody and grave, when they ought to bring smiles and gaiety to the poor lonely recluses of their firesides. Should they not consider that these coveted smiles are not so easily found among the cares and provocations of busy life? They are, perhaps, not, strictly speaking, the natural product of any part of this gloomy world; but they may be brought forth with a little exertion of female ingenuity, from the simple materials which compose the domestic circle.

The woman who is left in quiet among her household deities, can warm into life the latent constituents of cheerfulness with more ease than the overburdened head of the

family, when he goes abroad in pursuit of arduous, and perhaps painful, duties. A little exertion is always necessary to keep domestic life from stagnation, but it is the peculiar province of women to make that exertion.

Hortensia is one of those women, who exacts from her husband all those observances which I have mentioned as being peculiarly attached to the female department. She was educated by a despotic mother it is true, and this misfortune of her early life has shed a blight upon all around her. Having been restricted in liberty during her girlhood, she entered the state of matrimony with delightful anticipations of emancipation from control. Her husband was a man of mild affectionate temper, who yielded spontaneously to her requisitions, without questioning their justice, or objecting to the sacrifice of natural rights implied in them. During the despotism of her mother's government, Hortensia had acquired such little habits of deception as are the natural consequences of tyrannic restriction in childhood. Children who are unnaturally restrained, soon learn to indemnify themselves surreptitiously, when the eye of their tyrant is not immediately upon them. They contract sly habits of evasion, which insensibly mature into the practice of systematic deceit. It was thus with Hortensia. She was aware of this defect in her character, but she deemed it too slight to require correction, and thought herself rather to be pitied than blamed for the misfortune which had occasioned it. She would speak candidly of the errors of her education, and attribute to them the faults of her mature years, without thinking it at all necessary to correct them. From having been forced in childhood to practise implicit obedience, she contracted a belief that nothing was more essential to happiness, than to rule others as she herself had been ruled. Strange error, to suppose that because the abuse of power makes the subject of it miserable, it should therefore make the person who practises it happy! I believe

it will be found that the tyrant is as miserable as the person over whom he tyrannizes. Hortensia had a submissive husband, and yet she was not happy in her uncontrolled exercise of conjugal power. No woman can be; because she is violating the law of nature and of God, and the human heart is so constituted, that even the slender portion of happiness allowed to mortals can only be found in the path of duty. Hortensia thought the cause of her unhappiness was attributable to some defect in her husband's modes of yielding his will to her's. She complained of the slightest instances of self-gratification in her willing slave. She reproached him for not rejoicing sufficiently in his privilege of *conjugal obedience*. "If he loved her as he ought, he would be more cheerful when he did any thing to gratify her. If she was as dear to him as she *ought* to be, he would wear a more cheerful aspect habitually, and never give way to gloom in her presence. *She*, to be sure, had been unfortunate in her early life, and could not, therefore, be blamed for irregular spirits; but *he* had never been restrained unnaturally; his spirits ought to be always good." Hortensia, always restless and full of schemes, imagined that her husband endeavoured to thwart her secretly, and this suspicion gave her full authority to practise those arts of deception which the *necessities* of her girlhood had taught her. A thousand little plans were laid to overthrow his fancied assumption of power; and these gave scope to the perverted ingenuity of her mind. Her friends were assured that they could not see half the difficulties of the case. "They were not experienced like her in detecting stratagems to overthrow or supersede her legitimate authority. They knew not half the strangeness of the man she had to deal with. To *them*, her husband appeared very complaisant and obliging, even *self-denying*; but it was only artifice in him; he was self-willed and obstinate enough in reality. To be sure, he was an excellent man; she was proud of his virtues;

but with all his good qualities, he was like other husbands in this world, fond of having his own way in all things."

Thus this "excellent and virtuous man" contrived to keep alive the suspicion and disapprobation of his wife, and to maintain a constant flow of querulous complaints against him. His plans were slyly circumvented before they were formed; and Hortensia reproached him with disingenuousness, because he would not acknowledge that she was right in attributing them to him. When she carried her own point triumphantly, she could not enjoy her victory, because he would not acknowledge that he had set his heart upon doing exactly the reverse, and had sacrificed his will to hers. "Oh, to be sure," she would say, "you deserve no great praise for giving up to me, when you have no will of your own on the subject. I confess now, that a husband, to be a *good one*, ought to show the world, that he is willing to give up the point he is most set upon in the world, *solely to please his wife*." "Well, but, Hortensia, cannot you be satisfied to have your own way, unless it implies a positive sacrifice of mine?" said he, smilingly, one day. "To be sure not!" was her reply. "If I wish to prove that you are a good husband, how can I do it unless you give up your will to mine? You know how I have been thwarted all my life, and you ought to be pleased to crop yourself for my sake." Thus was poor Hortensia made miserable in the midst of acknowledged supremacy, because her power was exercised without giving pain to her subjects. She had been unhappy while under subjection herself, and she could not be content without inflicting the same degree of unhappiness on another. This seemed but just retribution to her, and any thing short of it did not indemnify her for her former sufferings.

These errors, derived from a faulty education, have been persisted in, from an imaginary necessity; whereas a little exertion of moral strength would have removed them.

Hortensia claims compassion, from having been brought up defectively, and persists in making herself, and those around her unhappy, merely because she has been so herself in girlhood.

So much for attempting to *rule*, when Providence has ordained that we should be *ruled*.

Believe me, dear Mary, ever yours.

LETTER VI.

Danger of associating with amiable Females who are without Religion.

MY DEAR MARY,

You have, among your nearest connexions, some uncommon specimens of female worth, without that faith in the Redeemer which should be the basis of all morality, and which you have been taught to think especially indispensable to your own sex. Doubtless when you yield yourself to the charms of their society, you are ready to ask, "Can there be no exception to the rule so imperatively assigned to me as a criterion of moral worth?" This hesitation is natural, but it is unsafe, my dear Mary; and you must accustom yourself to consider these very attractive friends of yours as dangerous intimates, if they do not (as I ardently hope they will) lay down their unbelief at the foot of the cross.

You know, my dear girl, how plain, unequivocal, and unsusceptible of evasion, is the rule laid down in Holy Writ, as the sole foundation of all hopes of salvation. When our Saviour said to Nicodemus, "Except ye be born again, ye cannot enter the kingdom of God," do you suppose that he

gave him credit for his sound morality, and let him hope for salvation through his own good deeds? Assuredly not. The most blameless and spotless character on earth, nay, the most actively benevolent of mortal men, cannot enter heaven, without faith in the atoning blood of Christ. Lay this holy truth to your heart, my dear Mary, and suffer no possible maxim of worldly sophistry—no subtle evasion of miscalled charity, to taint its sanctity. It is God's own holy truth, and man will not be held guiltless when he deviates one iota from its sanctified validity. No deeds can be accepted in heaven, however brilliant their aspect to the eye of man, until the being who performs them has been justified by faith in the Redeemer.

This sounds paradoxical to human ears, and according to merely human judgment. But you know, my dear Mary, that the Lord himself has declared, that his ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts.

I do not say, that virtuous deeds are not admirable *in our eyes*, when performed by the unregenerate; on the contrary, I acknowledge in myself a capacity of ardent admiration for the virtues even of heathen men; but the Lord has declared, that the most brilliant deeds of the virtuous are unacceptable to him, unless they are prompted by the desire of promoting his glory. Deeds cannot be virtuous in his sight, until the heart that prompts them has been born again of the Spirit, for nothing really good can proceed from the natural heart. Unless the sinner is first justified through faith in Christ, his fairest actions are prompted by some motive connected with carnal feelings, and therefore they must be impure in the sight of God. With regard to your unconverted friends, my dear Mary, I see much in them to attract affection; for they are gentle and generous, sensible and enlightened. Their conversation is far more innocent, and even instructive, than that of many professing Christians of my acquaintance, They speak of *books*, not *persons*, and therefore they rarely

tread the contaminated path of slander, or taint their thoughts with the unholy breathings of malicious scandal. Alas, how many souls are hurried to the realms of eternal darkness, by the envenomed habit of perverting truth for the purpose of winning others over to the unholy prejudices of a corrupt heart! How often do words heedlessly uttered warp the erect dignity of truth, till it stoops to minister to the impure cravings of a diseased soul. But let us forsake this sad subject. There is danger, my dear girl, in associating with those who are amiable and endearing in their manners, without blemish on their characters, and yet destitute of religion.

The arch enemy of souls is never better pleased than when he can interest professors in what has no reference to Christianity. This is a great danger in your situation, and one against which I would guard you particularly. You doubtless feel mortified when your friends dissent from your opinions on sacred subjects, or when they shun all conversation which tends towards them. You feel humbled also, when you present some leading truth in what you think a striking point of view, to their notice, and they turn coldly from the contemplation, or else lightly evade the topic. All these difficulties will suggest to you, at length, the propriety of refraining from every subject immediately connected with your faith, and dwelling in safe neutrality and silence for the present. There is evil in all these things, my young friend, and I wish to warn you from the worst shades of such a mental calamity as must be inseparable from infidelity.

In the first place, then, you must guard against falling into a supine state, while you are seeking to quell the unpleasant feelings arising from the unbelief of your friends. Never forget to feel for their danger; never cease to pray for their conversion; never, above all, suffer your feelings of interest to subside for a moment into the calmness of

indifference. Pray unceasingly, and with all the ardour of your soul, for the change from death unto life, of those deservedly dear to you. Something *must* be decidedly wrong when the believing and unbelieving live together without a constant recurrence to the circumstances of their state, either in conversation or in thought. Such a state of things argues both coldness of faith and indifference of friendship. For you must love the Lord little indeed, if you do not strive to win souls for his kingdom; and the chill of death must have fallen upon your friendship, when you cease to desire the kingdom of heaven for those you profess to love.

Beware then, my young friend, how you feel, and how you act in the society of those of whom I have spoken. Be assured that if you remain together long without a change for the better in *them*, you will have much reason to expect an alteration for the worse in yourself. You must either raise them towards your level, or you must insensibly be drawn downwards towards theirs.

There are many people who imagine, that by insisting so much on the necessity of faith, we undervalue good works. This opinion is very much quoted by those who consider an evangelical faith as something chimerical. But I affirm, in common with all spiritual believers, that true faith can be known only by its works. This was the test proposed by the Apostle James, who declares himself ready to show his faith by his works, whilst he affirms, that faith without works is dead. [See 2d chap. Epistle of James.]

It is a common expedient with unbelieving disputants to accuse those who lay a stress upon the necessity of faith, of insinuating that *mere* morality is quite unnecessary. Now, though there can certainly be very pretty morality without religion, yet there certainly can be no religion without morality. For instance, persons may deny the Lord that died for them, and yet maintain a very correct moral

deportment; whereas no one gives credit to the faith of a Christian who swerves from the moral law in practice.

Your unbelieving friends are, doubtless, exceedingly correct in their conduct, for they are greatly respected and beloved as virtuous individuals. They meet the reward of their virtues in the love and approbation of all who know them. But you, my dear girl, look for a higher and more enduring reward; not for an equally moral conduct; not, indeed, for any merits which you can plead; but because the Saviour in whom you believe, has been pleased to declare, that "He will reward those who diligently seek him." Endeavour, then, to show forth your faith by your works, so as to make it attractive to your friends. You must do this, not by a sinful acquiescence in what your conscience denies, and your heart disproves; not by practising that spurious virtue so much vaunted in the world under the name of *charity*, which consists in admitting what the word of God imperatively denies; not in conforming to the manners and practices of the world, under the plea of avoiding intolerance and over strictness: but in a steady, systematic performance of christian duty; a firm and clear declaration of Christian faith; a diligent maintenance of those graces of the christian character, which speak more strongly in favour of the religion you profess, than volumes of verbal panegyric. And to sum up all in one expression, let your religion be profitable to all around you, and it will soon establish your cause and the cause of God in righteousness. Some Christians express great sorrow for the condition of their unbelieving friends, and do really deceive themselves into a belief of their sincerity. But these are people not very much accustomed to examine the ground of their frequent declarations. Ask them if they pray earnestly for their conversion—if they really do warm their energies in behalf of their friends by much meditation on their spiritual danger—if they struggle for this blessing with many tears and sup-

plications—if they shrink with horror from the prospect of entering heaven without any hope of seeing there these dear objects of their love? All these interrogatories may serve to surprise the soul out of its supine forgetfulness; for none can persist in saying that they really desire a thing which they have never even prayed for. And what must be the spiritual condition of that person who slights the necessities of his dearest friends? who does not meditate upon their forlorn state, nor supplicate the Lord to change it? who sees unbelief secure in false peace before his eyes, and thinks of no means to avert the danger? Can this, I repeat it, be true friendship or true religion? Let us be wary, my dear Mary. Let us scan our state narrowly. We cannot be useful subjects of Christ's kingdom while we sit down carelessly with the unbelievers of our own household, and omit to plead daily for their conversion; neither can our own case be precisely safe, when we forget the imperious requisitions of religion, in the allurements of manners, or any mere carnal advantage possessed by those around us. May the Lord forgive and strengthen us, for the best of us are but unprofitable servants.

I remain your true friend.

LETTER VII.

Mistakes in Religion.

MY DEAR MARY,

Some one has reported to me, that one of your most interesting friends has lately professed religion. I earnestly pray this may be true; but there are so many counterfeits abroad, that I am always fearful of giving way to hope,

without proper ground for indulging it. The lady in question is so popular, and so much beloved in her erroneous faith, that I have thought her situation one of little encouragement to hope. Many fallacious signs of conversion appear in those gentle, amiable characters, which give rise to reports such as I have heard. But I know with how much complacency even Christians sometimes assimilate themselves with good amiable people of the world. They lose sight of the danger of associating with unbelievers, and even encourage their unbelief, by overlooking that most prominent defect of their characters, in consideration of some minor attraction of mind or manner. They even extol their associates for the *goodness of their hearts*, when the Bible (which they profess to take for their rule of life) tells them that the unconverted heart is "desperately wicked." This is rather inconsistent; but we soon learn that in this world the same terms have different meanings when applied to different things. A moral man is respected among his fellow beings; but mere morality will not carry him to heaven; for "without holiness no man can see the Lord." Christianity *must* make a man moral; but all the morality in the world cannot make him a Christian.

The first work of the Holy Spirit on the heart is to establish upright principles on a sure basis. When a man forsakes sin because he loves God, his conduct will become radically correct, and there will be a beautiful conformity between his principles and his actions. But when his sins are restrained only through the fear of worldly censure, or desire of worldly approbation, the restraint will be only external. The heart will still retain the germ of worldly passions, which will continue to work in secret, and to pour out their influence in many a silent stream upon the world. Many think they will go to heaven, because their lives are outwardly virtuous; but this belief is prompted most obviously by the deceitfulness of the desperately wicked heart. It is not sanctioned by scripture, and it will fail to support

the spirits in that honest hour, when worldly things assume their true value in human estimation. Such men will be then found to have dishonoured God; and remorse of spirit will overwhelm them in the season of conviction; they have been only seeking the applause of man, while they have arrogated to themselves a higher principle of action. The approbation of God they cannot attain, for they have not striven for it in the manner prescribed by himself. Dreadful indeed will be the moment when worldly delusions forsake the soul, and it beholds its past thoughts, impulses, and actions, by the refulgent beams of truth, then bursting, for the first time, upon the startled sight. How inconceivably trifling those interests will then appear, which have possessed magnitude sufficient to mislead the deluded spirit through all the changing scenes of life. As a man *thinketh in his heart, so is he*; not as he acts outwardly, under the impulse of worldly motives.

The carnal heart is still enmity against God, even when the outward actions are apparently conformable to reason and religion. Christian graces and worldly virtues are totally different things. The first spring from the regenerate heart, and bear an impress, however faint, of holiness. The last bear the inward stamp of selfishness, that inherent root of bitterness. The first have the glory of God for their permanent object, the last tend only to temporal profit or pleasure.

But there is yet another grade of morals which is attained by a strict attention to the forms of religion. These moralists affect to enlist with the Saviour, and wear his livery, while they are strangers to his spirit. The service is difficult, and they loiter behind while others are bearing the burden and heat of the day; though if they are questioned as to the service in which they have engaged, they point to the common emblem of salvation, the cross of the Redeemer, as their acknowledged standard. The forms of

religion may be maintained without a change of heart. They may be scrupulously observed, with as much tenacity as if every feeling and faculty were interested in their observance. When religion revives in a community, many assume it as a sort of fashion. Some are educated in its forms, and some adhere to them from custom. They tread the path of duty, because it is the plainest, not because it is the pleasantest. Many, again, are merely sensible of the necessity of religion. They think it a moral agent of great power, and therefore wish to engage it in meliorating the condition of man. Conscience at the same time warns them in secret, that their natural propensities require restraint. These take up religion as a kind of check, without intending a radical amendment. They begin right, but they stop short of efficient piety, and never make the discovery of their own inability to overcome nature. The sincere seeker after truth, meanwhile, becomes aware that his old nature is incapable of amendment, and he turns with avidity towards that principle which holds forth a new heart to the convicted sinner as the reward of his penitence and contrition. He finds that men may sometimes do right without this radical change, but that total and entire reformation is a thing not to be effected without the grace of God.

Again, there are some who profess Christianity from a mere speculative knowledge of its doctrines. This knowledge is certainly necessary to spiritual attainments; but it cannot supply their place. We must not only *know* God, but we must *love* him, before we can be Christians.

Wicked men, you know, are sometimes speculative believers; and the devils themselves believe and tremble. They hold orthodox opinions, and are well versed in Scripture. Satan himself is a profound theologian, as far as speculative knowledge goes. He would not so well know how to mislead people, if he was not intimately acquainted with the truth: And though he is denominated the father of

lies, there is not a holy truth revealed in the Bible, which he does not know and believe. He has deeper knowledge than many professing Christians, and this enables him to pervert those truths that they are ignorant of. Speculative knowledge improves the head, while the heart remains in its native depravity. Men may know God without loving him; but he will not save them unless they love him as well as know him. They may have the knowledge that puffeth up, and not that which edifieth. Let no hope of salvation rest on a speculative knowledge of the Bible. Deception in this case is easy, though it is fatal. People who are not experimentally acquainted with real religion, very naturally mistake the shadow for the substance. The form of godliness may be assumed with pleasure and profit. The Pharisees were distinguished for their outward sanctity, though their hearts were compared to a sepulchre; and it is fearful to think, that many in the present day resemble them closely. Many persons read their Bibles, and attend the ordinances of religion, while their unchanged hearts are full to overflowing of worldly conceits and affections. They know no more of vital piety than nonprofessors, while they continue to draw near to the altar in cold formality, and assume to themselves the name and prerogatives of real Christians. But the all-seeing eye discerns the progress of self-deception, and it is often his holy will, that the subtle craftiness of the evil one, should be disappointed in its effects; and the object selected as his victim, rescued from his power.

Do not think me tedious, dear Mary, in thus marking out the various sorts of religion which pass current in this delusive world for a pure and vital faith.

There is yet another class to which I must allude. It is that which consists of persons who have attained a conviction that they are sinners, and yet have not received Christ as a Saviour. They dread sin without knowing how to

avoid it. They exhaust themselves in fruitless efforts to cleanse their own hearts; while the Bible still proclaims, "Come to me, and be ye healed and cleansed." All their works are abortive; for they are done in their own strength, whereas Christ says, "Without me, ye can do nothing." "My strength is made perfect in your weakness."

They mistake the power of coming to the Saviour, or remaining aloof from him, for the power of rectifying their own errors. They will not come to him and have life, for they have a vague hope that life will come to them without this concession. Thus they loiter till the day of grace is past. Now Christ does not invest his creatures with the moral ability to do the work of sanctification themselves, but he promises to *work in* them the radical change from death unto life. They must understand and accept these conditions, before the covenant of grace can be laid hold of, as securing to them the blessings which it proffers. Man is able to come to Christ that he may be saved, but he cannot save himself without the agency of the Saviour. *Salvation* is the prerogative of omnipotence alone; but if the sinner feels the necessity of it, God is most willing to undertake the holy work. Man must be willing to receive grace, or it will not be imparted to him. He may mar his happiness by the misuse of his own moral faculties, just as the first of his race lost Paradise. But through Christ, God *can* save him, and if he complies with the conditions made known explicitly in his word, "God *will* save to the uttermost all who come to him."

Some receive salvation gladly on the Lord's own terms, while some hesitate, as if they could make other conditions for themselves. This is both foolish and irreverent. It is as little as we can do for him who died for us, to consent that he shall save us in his own manner.

But some people find their *moral faculties* any thing but free, for their exercise is impeded by a thousand strange

devices of Satan. Prejudice draws them one way and pride another, while the freedom of choice is completely destroyed.

I remember hearing a tale when I was a child, which is somewhat applicable to the subject of this letter.

An old man had two sons, who were one day surprised by the sight of a lion coming towards them, in a field near their father's house. They saw their danger, and looked around for help. On one side, there was a high wall, which surrounded their father's dwelling, on the other side of which, they heard the old man's voice affectionately exhorting them to come to him, and find safety. One of the youths determined to obey this injunction, but his brother opposed him vehemently—"Do you not see," said he, "that the wall is insurmountable?—its height is immense. The lion will pursue us until we reach it, and then find us an easy prey. I will trust to my speed, and attempt to escape in the opposite direction." "But," said the other in reply, "do you not hear our father urging us to climb the wall?—surely he would not do this if the thing was impracticable." "I don't care," said the other, "go your way, and I will go mine." There was no time for farther parley. The dutiful son followed his father's advice, and fled towards the wall. As he approached, he discerned a ladder of ropes suspended from the summit, on which he rapidly ascended. He did not fail to call aloud, announcing this intelligence to his brother, but his eyes turned towards him only to behold his destruction.

I have now pointed out to you, my dear Mary, the different semblances of Christianity, which pass current with superficial people for real conversion. May you be enabled to avoid these deceptions yourself, while you become qualified to warn others from similar dangers. First come to Christ, and there, leave it to him to work in you the requisite regeneration. Remember the sufficiency of his grace, and efficiency of his strength, to sustain you under every trial.

I am, with true affection, ever yours.

LETTER VIII.

Influence of Religion on the Temper.

MY DEAR MARY,

Having explained to you the nature of true conversion, I wish now to point out some of the Christian graces which are most lovely in a female disciple. Remember that good works are the only test of a true faith; and let your works, therefore, be manifest as a testimony of the sufficiency of that faith. Without the aid of the Spirit of God, the human heart remains in the same imperfect state which is natural to man; but shall Christ do nothing for you after you have complied with the condition of his covenant? Assuredly yes. Whatever defect of character may have been conspicuous in you before, is now to be amended by the all efficient grace of God. Try your heart, and prove its wicked ways, that they may be subjected to the healing Spirit. There is no Christian grace of greater value than a gentle temper; and yet few women take the trouble to acquire one, if nature has denied them the blessing. Surely this cannot be because they undervalue the quality. It contributes more to happiness than intellectual superiority, or wealth, however abundant, or any thing that my pen can enumerate. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Behold, the full and undivided inheritance of earthly good is awarded to the meek in spirit. They shall inherit all the good things of earth. That is to say, all the real blessings that fall to the lot of humanity shall be enjoyed by the meek spirited. They shall possess their souls in peace, amid the strifes and turmoils of ambitious and craving spirits. They are sure of winning the affections of the mild and gentle, while fierce and angry spirits will shun them spontaneously. The moderate enjoyments of life are suited to a meek temper; therefore they

will be assigned to it without dispute. Is this no privilege? Is not the very distinction of a meek and quiet spirit, dear to a thousand hearts? Who does not love the gentle in temper, and shun the irascible and impatient? For my part, I hold the single capacity of abstaining from anger under just provocation, to be an invaluable privilege. I had rather hear it said of one whom I love, that her temper could bear and forbear, amid the conflicts, and troubles, and trials of life, than to hear that she possessed the talents of a de Stael, or the wealth of Peru. A good temper hangs like a sunny sky over the conjugal hemisphere. Man may indeed bask in its perennial beams, till all his latent affections are warmed into life. I hold this quality to be one of the cardinal requisites of the conjugal character. How often is the happiness of married life completely blighted by the want of good temper in either party, but especially in the one from whom forbearance and meekness are most imperiously demanded! A bad temper is such a fruitful source of misery to all connected with it, that I cannot help considering it as one of the greatest misfortunes of life. Some persons are happily exempted by nature from this dreaded evil. They are so constituted as to be naturally slow to wrath, and patient under provocation. But the worst natural temper may be completely subjugated by grace. If I had felt myself excusable in doubting this fact, after the declarations of those who deem *grace* a universal corrective of human perverseness, I should have been long since forced to yield conviction to it, from observation of some persons most near and dear to my heart. Some of the most perfect tempers I have ever known, have been formed by the influence of grace, from a degree of petulance and irascibility, which rendered their possessors almost intolerable.

It is delightful to the true Christian to witness these triumphant examples of the power of religion, over the degenerate nature of man.

For my part, when I hear people extol Christianity, because they have witnessed some striking instances of its power in supporting the unfortunate, I cannot help turning with warmer feelings of approbation and applause, to examples of its influence in correcting tempers which had once been the scourge of their possessors. I question whether these effects of its divine power do not bear stronger testimony to its utility, in the eyes of its great Author. And I question also, whether the divine approbation does not flow forth more fully towards those who carry religion in their hearts as a daily antidote against some innate venom of nature, than towards such as proclaim its strengthening power in the season of affliction. Sorrow, it is true, has its paroxysms, when Christianity soothes the wounded spirit with irresistible skill. But passion has more frequent seasons of excess, when the same inward monitor is still more essential to the safety and comfort of the individual. Religion is great when it heals the broken heart, but it is doubly great when it checks the progress of soul-destroying sin.

Those who apply to Christianity only as a restraint to their sensibilities, while their passions are allowed to foam off their madness without check, are but little aware of the powerful agent they are neglecting to employ against their fiercest enemy.

It is obvious to me, in many cases, that the evil of an ungovernable temper, is rather tolerated than resisted. Many persons require their friends to bear with them under the plea that nature made them irascible; and these very persons will resort to religion in the season of affliction. Surely this is lamentably wrong. The same principle which is found efficient in the one case would be equally so in the other. One would think that the pain and shame of habitual irruptions of the temper would humble the proudest spirit, and send it to him whose strength is promised to all

who need it. Parents are often culpably negligent in suffering their children to grow up with unsubdued tempers. A little nursery discipline would strangle the monster in the cradle, like the fabled serpents of Hercules. But in our southern country especially, where the nursery attendants are generally ignorant slaves, it is inconceivable what mischief arises from maternal neglect.

Children are allowed to indulge all the native violence of their tempers, without any restraint, and even without admonition. If they wear a smiling aspect when brought out and exhibited to company, no inquiries are made respecting their conduct behind the scenes.

Indeed, the nurses frequently compound with their charges, by conniving at any excess in private, provided they behave with decorum in public. This is a dreadful instance of mismanagement. Mothers, it is true, are forced sometimes to leave their children solely to these ill-qualified guardians; but they should watch with ceaseless vigilance for every token of visible ill, arising from their superintendence, that they may apply such remedies as religion and experience suggest to the case under their inspection. It is a fatal error to judge from outward appearances, when you have to deal with people, whose sole mental exercises usually consist in devising cunning expedients to conceal their neglect of duty. The attendants of our southern nurseries are often adepts at deception, and the children under their charge sometimes witness all their little machinations. Dreadful lessons are given thus indirectly, and fearful consequences arise from unsuspected springs of evil. But maternal vigilance may prevent these terrible effects, so apt to result from our national misfortune. There is, it is true, but a choice of evils to persons so situated, but Christian prudence suggests many palliatives even to that portion of mischief which seems inevitable.

Virginia mothers should endeavour to form the characters

of their household attendants, by inculcating christian morality in its simplest form. Let them establish a few simple rules, and enforce them with firmness and yet with gentleness. Enjoin it as a particular duty in the nurse to inform against the little offenders, in every imaginable lapse from propriety. Errors of temper should be especially investigated; from infancy, children should be made ashamed of indulging passion in any form, and penance should be steadily inflicted on the offenders.

There is one very obvious source of evil to be avoided in our southern country. I mean the habit so common with our ignorant servants of vaunting to the children of rich parents all the imaginary advantages of wealth and luxury. I well remember hearing from my coloured nurse such details of the luxury which my father could afford, and his superiority in wealth to most of his neighbours, that my little heart was inflated with vanity.

Whenever the children of the neighbourhood came to visit me, I was sure to hear secret remarks upon their supposed deficiencies in *gentility*. Then, after their departure, my self-complacency was gratified by hearing comparisons to my advantage.

I was told how much more my father could afford than theirs; any little symptom of forced economy in their dress was pointed out as a proof of *meanness*.

I was instructed to hold myself above the children of the poor, because I was the daughter of a very wealthy man, and ought not to let myself down by associating with what were emphatically called *Poor Folks*.

Pride of wealth and pride of heart were thus carefully inculcated, and I remember well when I thought poverty a degradation, as well as a misfortune. Fortunately for my future peace, I was soon removed from a situation so replete with evil. But there are families among us, where a similar process of *instruction* has been carried on with more durable

effects. I know children, who have heard so much of the superior advantages of wealth and luxury from their menials, that they slight all companions who do not exhibit the exterior signs of these distinctions. And, unfortunately, this evil is not even suspected by their parents, who are totally unconscious of the pride and overbearing insolence exhibited by their children when they associate with less wealthy people. Alas, how many evils surround us in the common walks of life, of which the majority of those exposed to them are utterly unconscious! The remarks I have made on the subject of temper were suggested to me by a conversation lately held with my friend Emelia, concerning our personal experience of these bosom evils. I found, to my surprise, that her own struggles had been fierce with the demons of wrath and impatience. But for her own positive acknowledgement, I should never have suspected the nature of her inward conflicts; for her present demeanour is that of true Christian meekness and gentleness. She smiled when I adverted to her general reputation for goodness of temper, and observed that her own experience on these subjects might be a favourable specimen of the influence of grace on the human heart. "I was negligently brought up," added she, "so that the whole labour of subjugating the demon fell upon myself. I was left much to a nurse, who enjoyed a great reputation for skill in her department, which she owed solely to her craft in concealing her defects. She had sense enough to understand what was required of her, and cunning enough to feign all the qualities she wished to enjoy a reputation for. I was naturally excessively passionate, and she used often to provoke me wantonly, after which she would threaten to report me to my mother. This, however, she never did, or I might have derived some advantage from the measure.

"She taught me to think a great deal of the rich, and very little of the poor, without any reference to their intrinsic

merit. She gave me false ideas of generosity, by declaiming against all schemes of meritorious thriftiness as *mean*, while she praised actual wastefulness and extravagance as *real* generosity. My mind was completely bewildered on the subject of charity, by her singular perversions of its real meaning. If my parents relieved the necessities of the poor, she never failed to stigmatize the act as a piece of extravagance, alleging, that she knew well the persons were imposters and cheats. Again, if our poor neighbours were admitted to our table, my nurse would complain that my manners would be corrupted by such vulgar associates. She never took me to the cottages of the poor in our rambles, for fear I should become fond of low company. She instructed me to be haughty and insolent to my father's pensioners and dependents, because, she said, they would presume upon my condescension, to *get more money out of the family*. In short, I cannot detail all the perverted arguments and ingenious sophistry which this poor unenlightened creature used to corrupt my sense of right.

"You may suppose," continued Emelia, "what dreadful trials I was exposed to, when the cares and employments of active life found me thus wofully undisciplined in temper, to say nothing of my other defects. But I had fortunately received deep convictions of religious duty, and I never gave way to my hasty temper without bitter self reproach and remorse of conscience. I felt as if I disgraced the holy religion of Christ, by my frequent excesses of temper. To complete my troubles, I was exposed to the machinations of an evil minded person, who knew my defects, and practised every imaginable expedient to exasperate it. At that time, I thought her my greatest enemy; but since I understood human nature better, I have been thankful to the Lord for placing me precisely in the situation most favourable to the developement of my failings. If my temper had not been purposely exasperated, I should not have been made

to feel all the poignancy of my bosom sin, and consequently should not have struggled so prayerfully against it. Often have I passed the greater part of the night in all the agonies of penitential remorse, bathing my pillow with tears, and supplicating divine aid against my besetting sin.

“ I never permitted a single instance of anger or impatience to pass unnoticed. On the contrary, I brought each one with bitter self accusations to the foot of the cross, where alone I expected pardon or help in future trials. I had a near relative and friend who possessed the same natural defect, and I strongly recommended to her the same process of self-abasement. But her religious impressions were unfortunately not so deep as mine ; she sought to palliate her fault, while I steadily viewed mine in all its appalling terrors.

“ Oh, how dangerous is that same habit of self-palliation. My poor friend would say, ‘ I do not think my temper is so very bad—*it hurts me more than any one else*; and if I have to bear it, surely my friends can. Besides, my *heart is good*—I am not cruel or malicious—I don’t see ~~that~~ other people are so much better than myself. A good temper is a very rare quality, I think, and after all, one soon forgets what is said or done in anger. It is better to be passionate than obstinate ; and quick tempered people are always generous and candid. I think your really meek, gentle people are *too* soft and too yielding ; one should at least have a proper spirit, and after all, we must not scan too closely the precise degree of any fault. We are all bad by nature ; and people must take us as they find us. I am sure I have to bear with others ; what is more just than that they should bear with me.’ All these, and a thousand more self-delusive arguments, were used to drown the yearnings of conscience, until at length all desire of amendment was banished. My poor friend has grown more and more irascible as years and infirmities have increased a malady for

which no cure has ever been attempted. She still excuses her defect, and lays the blame of her frequent excesses upon all who have any thing to do with her. ‘You all try to provoke me on purpose,’ I once heard her say; ‘I should be as good tempered as any body in the world, if I was not tormented as no one ever was before.’ ”

Alas ! to those uninured to the salutary feeling, self-accusation seems an evil too great to be encountered voluntarily. Blessed be that religion which enjoins it as a duty, and will not leave its true votaries an excuse for neglecting it. “But,” continued Emilia, “my poor friend had one misfortune from which I trace many of her subsequent trials. Just as she was deeply engaged in investigating Scripture truth, in all its various aspects, she was assailed by a friend, who was terrified lest she should join a religious set which was peculiarly obnoxious to her, and came in pursuit of her on purpose to avert this imaginary evil. From that moment her thoughts were disturbed in their deep and placid current in the channel of truth, and called aside, to debate upon the various merits and demerits of certain unimportant points of doctrine. My poor friend was told that her first guides had neglected to warn her of certain pit-falls in the straight path of Scriptural investigation. She was alarmed into more caution ; and from that time she thought only of avoiding the doctrine of predestination and election. Her first convictions of sin were stifled : her first genuine movements of repentance were suspended : the full flow of mental inquiry was cramped, and distorted, and abridged within the narrow sphere of sectarian prejudice. That she might not become bigoted to one sect, she was carefully inoculated with bigotry to others, and thus closed her views of the mighty scope of christian faith, which is co-extensive with eternity.” I verily believe this to be one of the favourite expedients of Satan, to prevent people from understanding Christianity in its fullest extent. When he sees active minds fully engaged

with the subject of religion, he trembles for the subjects of his kingdom, and if he can contract their views within the narrow pale of sectarian bigotry, he most successfully prevents them from eluding his power, by keeping them in his own region of strife and controversy.

Think deeply on these subjects, my dear Mary, and never suffer your mind to be contracted, by adopting the *prejudices* of any sect. Find truth for yourself; you know where it is to be found, and establish it upon the sure foundation of enlarged and enlightened charity and love.

Your's ever.

LETTER IX.

Exemplifications of Good and Bad Temper.

MY DEAR MARY,

My friend Emilia sometimes furnishes me with sketches of character, drawn from her extensive acquaintance with human nature; and I cannot do better than to transmit them faithfully to you, as warnings or examples. Speaking with her on the importance of good temper, as an ingredient in domestic happiness, she observed, "If we scrutinize the private condition of our neighbours, we cannot fail to find *temper* at the bottom of most of their misfortunes. My friends and neighbours, Mr. and Mrs. Altorf, for instance, are striking examples of this truth. They have a rich measure of heaven's blessings—health, and wealth, and friends, and fine intelligent children; but the temper of Mr. Altorf sheds a blight upon their fairest prospects. I visited his wife yesterday, and was sorry to find her pale and thin, with a general air of discomfort and uneasiness about her. She

received me cordially, and a wan smile passed over her countenance like a faint sunbeam across a wintry cloud. To my inquiries respecting her health, she replied with her usual benign air of meekness, that she was in her usual health. After some general conversation, we fell into our usual style of familiar and friendly intercourse. Her voice became clear and cheerful; her air assumed its customary animation; when suddenly a cloud gathered over her brow, and her tone gradually lowered, until she seemed unable to finish the sentence she was speaking. Presently a bell rang long and loud, as if impelled by an impatient hand; her air of abstraction increased, and she rose with some perturbation and quitted the room. A moment after, I heard the voice of her husband, pitched in the loudest tones of anger; one of the little girls ran into the room and innocently laid her head in my lap, turning up her tearful eyes with a gentle sigh. A general silence fell on the little group, and I could not help feeling a shade of sadness creeping over my spirits. Here, thought I, are all the essential requisites to happiness completely marred by a single circumstance: here might be the fullest measure of earthly bliss but for one malignant quality which blasts the fairest promise of domestic peace. In a few moments my poor friend returned, with every token of suppressed agitation in her voice and manner. She made an effort to resume the subject of our discourse, but her expressions were incoherent, and her voice tremulous. One of the little boys entered the room crying bitterly, and exclaiming that his father had boxed his ears for *nothing* but because he was standing in his way without knowing it. 'Fie, Charles,' said his mother, 'you are a bad boy; your father has just had a most provoking accident happened to him, and you should not take such an opportunity to tease him by getting in the way.' Then turning to me, she continued, 'Mr. Altorf has just been telling me, that one of his finest fields of corn is seriously injured by a wanton piece

of carelessness in one of the servants. How many troubles and trials of temper arise from this source, to the gentlemen of this southern country." I acquiesced in this preparatory observation, for I saw through the delicate expedient of my friend to account for the probable ill humour of her husband. When the master of the house entered, I could not help regarding him scrutinizingly. His features were regular, and he would have been called a handsome man by those who can dispense with a pleasant countenance as an ingredient of manly beauty. There was a cloud on his brow which overshadowed his eyes, and darkened their expression as the summer cloud obscures the landscape, when it gathers dark and dense athwart the blue face of heaven. All his features lowered under its influence, and the muscles of his face seemed to have lost their elastic property, by habitual tension. He smiled, indeed, and took my hand with an appearance of cordiality; but there was more of lightning than of sunshine in his smile. It came like an electric flash from his overloaded brow, and only remained long enough to make its darkness visible. I could not help moralizing on the nature of an evil which sheds so fatal a blight over the fairest prospects, and yet is so seldom combated in its most vulnerable state. In making a serious estimate of the blessings of life, few think a good temper worthy of a prominent station; and yet, the want of it renders every other unavailable. Who can be tranquil within reach of a volcano, which sends forth threatening smoke habitually, and often showers down the red lava stream of wrath on all around, so as to scorch and wither every tender affection, every social sympathy? The very children hang their heads in undefined dread at the approach of the being whose presence should be as the fostering sunshine to their souls. Who that witnesses such a spectacle, can join in the common place assertion, that a bad temper is but a subordinate evil in the catalogue of human grievances?

“It is impossible that any person, endowed with the ordinary portion of good natural feelings, can be happy in the whirlwind of a troubled spirit; the atmosphere of storm and tempest; the incessant bursting forth of the troubled elements of passion. The love of peace is inherent in our nature; and to the regenerate heart, peace becomes the emblem of divinity, the token of a heavenly Father’s love. We cannot be happy where its hallowed rights are infringed, its sacred prerogatives denied. Heaven is the abode of peace. Our God is emphatically a God of peace. Discord is his enemy. Human wrath is one of the subjects of his immitigable enmity.”

These remarks of Emilia struck me forcibly, and I have endeavoured to convey their spirit, if not their substance, to my dear Mary.

On another occasion, Emilia gave me a sketch of two characters with whom she is intimately connected.

„Portia and Flavia, said she, are both conspicuously endowed with a rare assemblage of tastes and talents. Being wealthy, they enjoyed all the advantages of education afforded by our country. Their progress was almost exactly similar; and when they returned home after having gone through the usual routine of mental cultivation, their *debut* in life attracted much attention.

For a time, their success was equal, but at length it became obvious, that Portia possessed the warm affections of those who gave Flavia only their admiration. Yet none could tax the latter with any positive defect of manner or character. It was in trifles which scarcely admit of detail, that Portia won upon the hearts of her associates. As the summer dew refreshes nature in the absence of redundant moisture, so did the silent influence of her kindly feelings pervade the bosoms of those within the sphere of her attractions, reviving the languor of their drooping feelings.

After a residence of some months in the same family with

the two sisters, I was conscious of a warm preference for Portia, though I was still ignorant of the defects of Flavia's temper. These seemed to consist more in negative than in positive faults. She certainly was not prompt in obliging her friends, even when the obligation cost her no apparent sacrifice; yet no one could accuse her of being hard of heart or indifferent. But Portia showed not only a readiness, but an impatience to gratify her companions. For instance, when Flavia refused to play on the harp, because, as she alleged, she was not in the humour for music, Portia took her place, and played the whole evening, to the great gratification of some ardent admirers of that instrument. When she retired for the night, she showed me one of her fingers which was swelled and inflamed, so as to make her compliance with the wishes of the party exceedingly painful. When thanked for her obligingness, she replied with good humour, "Flavia plays much better than I do, but she does not like to *exhibit* herself, as she calls it. For my part, I play for no other motive than to give my friends pleasure."

Trifles may be considered as safe indications of the prevailing temper of mind. Flavia was apt to make careless speeches, which sometimes gave offence without any intention on her part. When told of these instances, she expressed contempt for the weakness of mind which could misconstrue her meaning, but showed no kind of regret for the impression actually made on her companions. Portia, on the contrary, always mild, gentle, and observant of every one's feelings, would exert herself seriously to remove the most trifling misconception of her conduct. Flavia thought herself entitled to the friendship of her connexions, and left it to flow spontaneously towards her. Portia seemed doubtful of her claims to regard, and was always eager to increase it, by numberless trifling *solicitations*, as they might be called, of those kindly feelings which she

loved to awaken. By degrees, Flavia's manners became colder and less attractive. When told of this change, she assigned as a cause for it, "that her knowledge of the world was increasing, and she found mankind too little attractive to excite her interest." The two sisters married, and carried their distinctive characteristics with them into conjugal life. Portia set an example of meekness and gentleness in her intercourse with a man of quick temper, which soon completely corrected her husband's fault, and made him every thing she could desire. He often speaks of her behaviour to him at that period with great admiration and gratitude.

Flavia married a man of indolent character, and indifferent, careless temper. He yields himself entirely to her control, so that she has no occasion to exert her spirit in ruling him. Yet she seems soured and discontented, as if every thing in life had fallen short of her expectations. Her countenance has gradually contracted a cloudy expression, which gives one an impression of inward discontent. Her children are intelligent and handsome; yet their manners do not convey the idea of domestic happiness. There is a cloud upon the social circle, which chills the spirits, even of their casual guests. No one can account for this circumstance, for both the heads of the family are much respected in their general character. Flavia boasts herself to be a manager of the old school. She declaims against the too great relaxation of discipline in the present age, and whips her children and scolds her servants to mark her disapprobation of modern indulgence. Her favourite theme of discourse is the comparative merits of the two systems. She bears hard upon all who advocate the one she disapproves; and several of her neighbours have waxed cold towards her in consequence. She rebroaches Portia's lenient system of management, and prognosticates nothing less than ruin as the result. It sometimes happens that errors appear in the

executive department of her own household, which give cause of malicious triumph to her neighbours. Mrs. A. went to condole with her, on hearing that the servant she had bought from Mrs. B., had turned out badly. But Flavia assigned all the blame to Mrs. B. herself, who had given very unmerited praise to an indifferent servant, that she might sell her advantageously.

Flavia is armed in a sevenfold shield of self-complacency, and it is almost impossible to find a vulnerable part in her panoply. Portia, on the contrary, is quick sighted to her own defects, and is always the first to blame her own conduct. She endeavours to rouse her sister to a sense of her danger; but Flavia reminds her that they were always entirely different in temper and character, and that Portia cannot form a proper estimate of her feelings, with much of the other jargon common to those who choose to be wrong.

Portia's family circle is a perfect specimen of domestic felicity. It is easy to discern at the first glance, that the husband and wife wholly approve, and tenderly love each other. The children, too, bear their part, from the oldest to the present tenant of the cradle, in the well performed concert of harmonized hearts and minds. It is refreshing to all one's best feelings to make one of that charming group, even for a day.

In Flavia's family, on the other hand, though every thing is arranged with elegant hospitality, and there is a show of wealth just restrained by rational economy, you involuntarily droop and become languid, under the influence of the torpor of feeling which reigns around. All is dull, and cold, and spiritless. Conversation is rapid, and mirth, if attempted, soon darkens into solemnity. Flavia seems to approve of nobody; and her affections are still more contracted than when in early youth. Yet she talks of the advantages of her situation, and pities persons who are much happier than herself, for being without them. She thinks her own

state far more desirable than Portia's, and even affects to believe, that Portia herself is secretly touched with envy at her superior advantages. She pities her for having a high spirited husband, and wonders how she can endure his temper. "I should die under such thralldom as poor Portia has to endure," she will say. "But, to be sure, she had always a *poor spirit* of her own. She thinks, because I have some independence of character, that I am *ill-tempered*, and she calls me obstinate because I have some perseverance!"

Portia and Flavia, each undertook a Sabbath school, and both met with opposition from the ignorance of their country neighbours. Portia persisted in winning over her opponents with gentle representations of the utility of her plan. Flavia blamed her for condescending to use persuasion with such people. She carried her point bravely, by bearing down her opposers; and having established the school to show that she would not be outdone, she quietly relinquished the scheme.

Portia, having succeeded in convincing her neighbours of the expediency of her plan, continued to maintain the institution, with great trouble to herself. But she was rewarded by becoming the benefactress of the poor in her neighbourhood, who to this day bless God for having cast her lot among them.

The two sisters are both professors of religion, and the characteristics which distinguished them as women of the world, have remained with them under the most important of all changes. Portia's meekness is truly evangelical. Flavia's roughness of manner is mistaken for Christian candour. "Oh, I must speak truth to every one. It is a Christian duty," says she. Then her harsh temper leads her to rebuke with petulance and severity. Portia represents to her that she does discredit to the cause of religion by her violence.

What! said she, must I be as faint hearted and cowardly as you are, in rebuking sin? Does not the Scripture say, "be ye angry and sin not!"

But, said Portia, I understand the Apostle to mean that as a prohibition to anger, as if he had said, Do not ye be *angry and sin*; or rather, be not you *angry and sin*.

That is not my interpretation, said Flavia. Anger is natural, and as we cannot help it, we must make a scriptural use of it, and rebuke sinners with spirit. We cannot change our temperament. What nature made it, we must be content to leave it.

What! said Portia. If grace can change the heart, cannot it change the temper? Are not we especially enjoined to be slow to wrath, because the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God? Are we not required to be like-minded with Christ; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again? Are we not to learn of Him who was meek and lowly of heart? Is not the wisdom from above first pure, and then *peaceable, gentle*, and easy to be *entreated*, full of mercy and good works? Is not the fruit of righteousness *sown in peace*, to them *that make peace*? Are there not awful denunciations against the lovers of wrath and strife? They are told in plain terms, that they shall not enter the kingdom of God. In short, are not gentleness and meekness indispensable requisites of the Christian character? Were they not eminently exhibited by the author of Christianity, and are they not imperatively inculcated in every part of the holy volume? Oh, my dear Flavia, lay not the flattering unction to your soul, that because your temper is not gentle by nature, you are permitted to indulge unchristian feelings. *Grace* will give you that gentleness which nature denied you. But oh, do not dishonour God by imputing to his holy religion the inconsistency of prohibiting some things imperatively, and then sanctioning their practice in professors of Christianity. No, what he has forbid-

den to all, he will not suffer in one. What he requires generally, he will exact individually.

So much for Emilia's representations of character. Reflect on these things, dear Mary,

And believe me ever, &c.

LETTER X.

False Sensibility exemplified.

MY DEAR MARY,

I have endeavoured to guard you against the evils of *temper*, and I will now say something on the subject of inordinate sensibility. I do not mean that sickly exuberance of self-love, which I once warned you against; but the excess of sincere and honest feeling. Women are proverbially soft hearted: nature, education, and the customs of society, combine to foster their sensibilities. Their state of dependence on man, makes them peculiarly sensitive; for, having no security but his tenderness against the many ills of life, if that resource should fail, they are left desolate. Yet believe me, in many instances, the patience and forbearance of the stronger sex, are too severely tested by the ill governed tenderness of woman. I have observed in females, an unreasonable tenacity of opinion, in trifles beneath the serious consideration of rational minds. They require a thousand petty observances, which weary and disgust their lofty minded superiors. It is certainly bad policy to persist in these requisitions. Whatever sacrifices man may choose to make to his female companion, should be graciously received; but if he manifests unwillingness to give up what she, perchance, most earnestly desires, let her take a lesson in self-denial, and submissively resign it. She will find her

happiness promoted ⁱⁿ the end, by any resignation of self-will she may have strength to put in practice. Much of the misery that abounds in conjugal life, might be spared through the observance of this rule. But women, in general, seem more tenacious of their rights, in proportion to the requisite abridgment of them. They hold fast that which they should surrender without a murmur. There is but one rule for conjugal obedience, and that is, that the woman should obey all such requisitions as are consistent with her higher duties. If she is unfortunately yoked unequally with an unbeliever, she must obey God first, and her husband afterwards. But this is a situation, in which no considerate Christian female will ever voluntarily place herself. A woman who loves God, and desires to serve him, will never risk uniting herself with one who is still in the darkness of unbelief. She has no right to expect a blessing on any prayers she might intend to put up for her partner, for God has only promised his blessing to those who move in the prescribed path of duty.* Who could venture to say to God—"Lord, I have disobeyed thy commands, nevertheless, I expect a blessing upon the forbidden step I have taken. I have married a man who denies the Saviour who died for him; he treats with coldness or contempt my religious profession. He considers my dearest hope as a wild chimera, and the object of my dearest affections as a fabled being: and yet I expect to be happy with him; to be able to reconcile my duty to him, with my duty to you, so that neither will clash with the other!" Is

* Different expositions of 2 Cor. vi. 14, are given by commentators, but it cannot be shown that the Apostle had any special reference to the subject of marriage. It seems to be a general caution against all avoidable intimacies with unbelievers, by which believers might be enticed from the purity of their principles, or their lives, into a conformity with the world. But if this should be a general maxim of conduct, how forcibly does it apply to that most intimate of connexions, the marriage union, P,

not this strange reasoning? But I forewarn you, my dear girl, that the hope of being happy in such an union is vain. Nay—I dare not even promise you security in such a state! How can the love, which is felt for an infidel, be productive of happiness to a vital Christian? Can a wife bear to think of the probable doom of the man she loves? can she love him truly, and endure the thought of an endless separation from him?—Surely not. There are impediments in this bad world to conjugal felicity, without this most insurmountable one. The very acuteness of sensibility which characterizes women, operates to the destruction of their happiness, in such a case.

The advice which I now give you, dear Mary, to curb even your amiable feelings, will tend to prepare you for happiness in the married state. When I think how much misery is occasioned by the ungoverned sensibility of women, I feel inconceivable anxiety to warn you on this head. Excess of all kinds is to be avoided, and we may love those with whom we are connected in this life idolatrously, and thus lay ourselves open to the awful penalty of God's violated law. If we love God supremely, there is no fear of our exceeding in the measure of our subordinate affections; yet, trust me, my dear girl, there is more pain than pleasure in inordinate attachments to our kindred dust. Women are most prone to commence conjugal life, by expecting the same devoted attention from the husband, that they received from the lover. This expectation will almost always be disappointed; for when the cares and avocations of life press hard upon the head of a family, he has not that time for cultivating his tender feelings, that his unoccupied hours of youth afforded. It is a fatal error, for a woman to suffer herself to be soured by perceiving this inevitable change. She had far better lay up firmer materials for domestic happiness, than those gathered from the romance of a youthful attachment. I have known wives make themselves completely miserable,

because their husbands were wanting in some little trivial attention, which they had been accustomed to pay the mistress or the bride. That morbid sensibility, which watches every turn of the eye, and every tone of the voice, lest perchance they should indicate some change of feeling, is the scourge of both parties in married life. True affection is a dignified and exalted feeling, that needs not such dainty aliment to maintain it. It is supplied by a perennial flow of vital kindness, springing from the heart, and sanctioned by the understanding. It looks not to trifles as signs of its existence, for it pervades every impulse, and reigns in every action. Yet this deep and abiding love, may exist without those exterior observances, which mark rather the requisitions of the wife, than the spontaneous tenderness of the husband. They may be exacted until they become mechanical and unmeaning, if not irksome and disagreeable. Why should it be said of women, that they are always unreasonable in their exactions of attention and respect from their husbands? Does not this evil sometimes arise from vanity, which is gratified by exhibiting its power, or from a desire of being conspicuous amongst married people less tenacious of these observances? I once walked in the dark after a married couple, who little dreamt they had an auditor, and I heard the wife reproach her husband vehemently, for his want of attention toward her during the evening: "You neither brought me refreshments, nor turned over the leaves of my music book, nor asked me if my headach had gone off, during the party," said she. "Indeed, my dear," said the husband, "you were surrounded by so many who paid you these attentions, that I thought my presence would be superfluous. As for your headach, I thought of that, I assure you, but you looked so blooming and handsome, that I was in hopes you could not be suffering bodily pain." "Perhaps," said she, quickly, "you thought me deceitful, and did not believe in the reality of my headach?" "O, my dear!

how can you believe me capable of such odious suspicion,—did I ever give you reason to doubt my perfect reliance on your word?” “I don’t know,” said she, peevishly; “you are strangely altered, I think; at least I am not as happy, or as secure of your affections, as I used to be.” “O dear,” exclaimed the husband, “this is both unkind and unreasonable.” The wife here burst into tears. “I knew,” sobbed she, “that my time of misery would soon come, but I little thought, when I came out this evening, of hearing such bitter reproaches!” “Hush, hush! my dear wife, I hear footsteps; don’t let us make ourselves ridiculous.” This made matters worse. The wife wept more bitterly, and said that her sensibility was scorned, and her affection slighted. How far the scene proceeded, I know not, as my way led me in a different direction. But I frequently saw this couple, and all my observations tended to convince me, that the lady was destroying her own happiness.

I accidentally met her one day in a store, with a radiant countenance, looking over some newly imported goods. She had just selected a silk, and had the dress pattern cut off, when her husband entered. She went up to him, playfully, and said, “Come now, admire my taste,—look here,” pointing to a silk that had just been rejected as *frightfully unbecoming*, “I want to try your taste, and see if it is not instinctively similar to mine. An’t this beautiful; and an’t this ugly?” pointing to her own choice exultingly. The poor man happened to be totally without taste, but he made all possible haste to agree with her, not being aware of her stratagem. Her brow clouded instantly. “What!” said she, “are you serious?—can you think this frightful thing handsome in reality?” “My dear, did you not tell me you admired it?” Yes; but I concluded of course you would understand my jest: I wanted to exhibit your taste to these ladies.” “Then, my dear, you wanted to exhibit what I have not, and never shall have.” “Well,” said she, “I

had hoped you would learn of me such trifles as these ; but I see you disdain the idea of being taught by your wife : true man ! after all my hopes that you were unlike the rest of your sex."

I witnessed many more instances of a similar nature, which accounted for the change that four fleeting years made in both husband and wife. At the end of that time they left our city, and I know not what has become of them. I was invited, among other friends, to spend an evening with them before their departure, and I cannot give you a better lesson on the subject of ill governed sensibility, than by narrating circumstantially the events of the evening.

I was one of the first guests who arrived, and as I entered the passage, I heard voices pretty loud in a side room. " You must have your own way, to be sure, as master of the house and of me," said the wife, " but you violate all my wishes, and derange all my plans, by your arbitrary proceedings." " My dear Ester," said a soothing voice, " I am not the tyrant you represent. If I had a reasonable wife, I should be a complaisant husband." " Ay, that is always your way, —you lay your own faults upon me, and represent me as a virago ; when every body knows I was a remarkable sweet tempered girl." " I know you were, Ester ; that was one of your greatest attractions to me ; for I always thought a good temper an indispensable requisite in married life : but —I shall offend you if I go on." " Never mind, speak sir," said a whining voice—" I give you leave." " Well, my dear wife, I will speak, with the hope of opening your eyes at last to your greatest fault, and my greatest misfortune. Your morbid sensibility is almost as great a scourge to me, as a bad temper could be. You are perpetually doubting my affection ; and if you don't take care, you will yourself fulfil the prophecy you have so often uttered, that I shall cease to love you altogether. Pray restrain these unreasonable feelings. Confide in my regard, instead of looking to

every transient occurrence for proof of its sincerity ; believe my assertion, and you will be happy. It seems to me, that every trifle that has occurred since our marriage, has been made to bear testimony against me ; while the important steps I have taken to promote your happiness, has been omitted in the calculation. To go no farther back than this night, you are reproaching me for leaving one of your servants behind, who would be made miserable by a removal ; when I am taking the most important step of my life, solely to please you. I am quitting my own family, to carry you among yours, because I cannot bear to hear you pine after your mother and sisters so much. I don't know that my interest—the interest of my wife and children, may not suffer by this step.” “ Oh ! say no more, I entreat,” said she. “ It is not too late to stop : we will not remove. I insist on it. Never can I bear the reproach of having ruined my family, by my ungoverned sensibilities. O, that my heart were ossified—that I were incapable of feeling ! But I shall soon become callous. Yes ! I feel it. I am no longer so sensitive as I was : incessant reproaches must have their destined—their desired effect.” Here the conversation was interrupted, by a servant's giving notice of my arrival.

The husband soon entered, and greeted me cordially. He was pale and thin, and had a worried, harassed look ; as if care had borne heavily on his young heart. Yet he was prosperous in his circumstances, and possessed a numerous circle of respectable friends and connexions. He was naturally a healthy, robust man, with a cheerful, buoyant temper. He led by the hand his eldest child, a delicate sickly-looking boy, who has been overnursed by his overfond mother, till he looks like a pining exotic. I am told she never suffered the wind of heaven to breathe on him, and her husband had been forced, against his better judgment, to acquiesce in her injudicious system of management. Presently, the wife herself appeared, languid and melan-

choly, with tokens of suppressed emotion, visible to my scrutinizing glance. She had scarcely returned my salutation, when she exclaimed in alarm, on seeing her son sitting in an open door, "Oh, my darling boy, you will catch your death in that draught of air. How could you let him sit there, my dear?—but you never think of these things. I'm sure the poor child will have the croup to-night"—so saying, she hurried him off: his father sighed deeply, and more company coming in, the conversation became general.

As I have fallen upon the plan of exemplifying my precepts by sketches of character, I will begin another letter with a contrast to this melancholy picture. Adieu for the present, my dear girl; if I can save you from the foibles of your sex, and yet preserve their distinguished good qualities in your character, I shall be most happy.

Ever your sincere friend.



LETTER XI.

Picture of Domestic Happiness.

MY DEAR MARY,

Mr. and Mrs. Arundel have passed twenty years in happy wedlock, and it is quite a privilege to see them in their own home, surrounded by their numerous offspring. I spent a week with them, a short time since, and came home with my thoughts rich in images of beauty and virtue. Mrs. A. is still a lovely woman; for happiness seems to have repaired or prevented the ravages of time in her person. Her husband's eyes involuntarily follow her, as she flits about her household duties with a grace that would do honour to juvenile years. It is delightful to hear this cou-

ple speak of each other, and give up all the merit of their happiness to the one whom each delights to honour.

"They say conjugal happiness is rare," said the husband; "but I see no reason why it should be. If we only follow common sense, and the Christian rule of doing as we would be done by, there is no doubt but happiness would be the result. We are by nature social beings, and the laws of God encourage us to seek happiness in social connexions; and yet there are dry, steril, withered old bachelors, that will tell you, they dared not marry for fear of being miserable for life. Now for my part, the idea of misery most familiar to me, is exemplified in these very old bachelors. They have no one to sooth the infirmities of declining years, or comfort nature in her most comfortless state. They leave none behind to remember them, and talk with affectionate interest of their enduring qualities. And as for conjugal happiness being a difficult matter, why my wife and I will tell you how we managed the thing! Come, Helen, let us take a retrospect of our early life, and tell our friend the secret of conjugal felicity." His Helen smiled sweetly, and took her seat beside him.

"We began," said she, "by loving one another more than we loved ourselves. This made it easier to give up, than to persist in self-will. I well remember some of our difficulties, however; and when I see thousands wrecked on the same shoals, I always wish I could warn them off, by stating my own experience. Mr. Arundel was a politician when I married him, and I thought it a bitter thing, to see him so taken up with what I could not understand. Often have I been ready to complain, when he would come with his head full of grave, statesman-like plans, instead of something pleasant and companionable. He would sit for hours in my presence, as if he did not see me, with his mind brooding over abstract subjects. This required a little exertion of fortitude on my part. Here, he has taken me

from my friends, I would say, and yet I have none of his society. I am moped to death—what shall I do? Must I complain, and reproach him? O no. My heart could not frame a reproach. I began to think that my duty required me to submit to his will. That his reveries might be important to other people, if not to me. O, how my heart beat with pleasure, when I heard him applauded vehemently for a speech, made on the very subject which had occupied his mind so long. If I had interrupted him with my selfishness, now thought I, he never would have been able to concentrate his attention so as to excel.” “But you forget, Helen,” interrupted the husband, “how much you aided me in my labours, by indulging my thoughtful humours, and keeping every thing out of my way, that could possibly give me disturbance; how you brought refreshments to the door of my study, and knocked gently for admittance, and always retreated as soon as I had partaken of your nice cake and cordial. It used to cost me a pretty hard struggle to let you go off, I assure you. If you had made the slightest movement like desiring to stay, I should have kept you, and then my mind would have been taken from the subject I was studying.” “Ah!” said Helen, “I remember shedding some foolish tears one day, because I thought you dismissed me coldly. But I went into my room, and prayed that God would give me strength to bear my disappointment, if I was indeed fated to have an indifferent husband.” “And I too was a little miffed,” said he, “to think that you should never offer to stay with me. So we were mutually undergoing the same self-inflicted trials.” “I remember,” said Helen, “the first large party we went to, you were so much occupied with politics, that you did not once approach me, or appear conscious of my presence. A lady, famous for her spirit of malicious observation, whispered loud enough for me to hear her, that you were the most indifferent young married man she had ever seen, and that she was sure you

did not care a button for your wife; shortly after the party dispersed, and you tucked me coldly under your arm, and carried me off, without speaking one word during our walk home. As soon as we arrived, I left you, after bringing you your usual evening refreshment,—you called with an absent air for a whole candle, as you intended to sit up all night. I commanded myself as well as I could, and bade you good night with an unsteady voice. You did not reply, and I went to bed wondering if all husbands were as indifferent as mine.” “You were a dear good creature,” exclaimed her husband, “to bear with me as you did, and I hope you have since had your reward.” “O yes, I have indeed!—I have wondered oftentimes since, whether any other women in the world had such attentive husbands as mine. But one of my greatest trials was, when I discovered how much we differed about the management of our children. I was for bringing them up very delicately, and you justly determined that their constitutions should be casehardened. Nothing but the strongest sense of duty could have made me submit to this terrible act of self-denial. It seemed to me little less than murder, to subject a delicate infant to the keen air of the morning. I have often cried in secret, when you gave directions for the baby to be carried out to walk.” “But, my dear Helen, though I was somewhat despotic in this, yet I had reason on my side clearly. I was sorry for the pain I gave you, but it was to save you from a greater suffering, that I determined, by resolute conduct, to rescue our dear children from the inevitable consequences of your injudicious fondness. I always looked forward, too, to the time when you would agree perfectly with me on this subject; being confident that your good sense would finally prevail over your excessive fondness, so as to dictate proper methods of management. If you had been one of those silly women, who never give up an idea because it is their own, I might have despaired of you; but you never were

self-willed. Your mistake was a natural one for a young mother, and I felt assured it would soon be set right." "Yes, my dear," said the happy wife, "and I owe you infinite obligations for overruling me in this matter. I have a sister who fell into precisely the same error of management; unfortunately, her husband left her to direct, and their children one half died in infancy, while the other half can scarcely be said to live in manhood, their constitutions are so slight."

I could not help mentioning to Mrs. Arundel, as she said this, the debate I had heard between the husband and wife mentioned in my last letter. "Yes," said she, "I know the lady well. She is destroying her own peace, and that of her husband, by her unreasonable sensibility. When once a woman falls into the habit of exacting petty observances from her husband, she becomes as much his tyrant, as if she ruled in all things. It has been said, that single drops of water falling in regular succession on the head, occasion unindurable torment. So will these petty acts of tyranny, if regularly practised, destroy the peace of any man. The constant puling and wailing of discontent, always stating some trifling cause of complaint, is a misery in itself. For a man to live always under a cloudy countenance, is as bad as to be subjected to the vapour and smoke of London itself. Women do certainly possess the power of tormenting their partners, by such absurd conduct, but at the same time they trifle away their own happiness. Married people must either be happy or miserable together. When one of your limbs is in violent pain, the rest of the body suffers by sympathy. So it is in the mystic union of marriage. If one party is unhappy, the suffering is cast upon the other also, in a greater or less degree, in proportion to the degree of affection entertained by the parties for one another. There should be perfect confidence between a married couple, and yet each should be so

practised in self-command, as to be able to endure pain or sorrow, without communicating it to the other. There should be a mutual willingness to endure each other's burdens, and yet a mutual desire to suffer alone, rather than impart suffering to the dearest part of oneself. One decisive proof of the impropriety of a woman's governing her husband, may be derived from the well known fact, that *really* fine women never undertake the unbecoming task. Those who excel in this invidious art, are generally cunning, self-willed characters, without delicacy or refinement. If a woman really loves her husband, it will give her far more pleasure to obey him, than to govern him. Warm affection finds pleasure in submission, and delicacy shrinks from sway. Even where the female understanding is the strongest, a woman of refinement is the last to admit the fact, or to avail herself of it, by taking the power into her own hands. It is always painful to be forced to acknowledge the inferiority of that intellect, to which one has looked for support in the arduous duties of life."

If I had before doubted these truths, my dear Mary, the manner in which I heard them urged, and saw them exemplified on this occasion, would have proved their correctness. In this family, there was obviously one pervading will, so unanimous were all the desires and operations of its united head. There was a freedom and cheerfulness among the children, which proved that the gloss had not been taken from nature's own light-heartedness, by the damps and chills of discordant rulers. They were so certain that their parents agreed on all subjects, except on those in which they had *agreed to disagree*, that they never felt afraid of pleasing one at the expense of the other. To my surprise I found, after I left them, that one of these preconcerted differences, was on the tender subject of religion. Helen was a Presbyterian, her husband an Episcopalian; and they enjoyed themselves as Christians together, as if

they had belonged to the same sect. How often have I known this very difference made an excuse for altercation and ill-will. But where the spirit of discord prevails, it will subsist on aliment scarce visible to common observers ; and where it does not exist, the most important discrepancies will fail to produce it.

I left Mr. and Mrs. Arundel with the delightful conviction that I knew, not only one happy couple, but that I knew how more happy couples could be made ; namely, by practising self-denial and forbearance mutually, by cultivating disinterested affection, and resigning the dear delight of giving pain, said by satirists to be so valuable to woman. My dear Mary, the sex deserve many of the severest sarcasms thrown out against them. They do not sufficiently cultivate those virtues which their relative duties require them to practise. Until they lay aside the desire of governing their husbands, and learning to govern themselves, they cannot be happy in married life. The same energies, wasted on a mistaken aim, will suffice to produce the blessed end of peace and happiness. O, may you profit by these hints from

Your true friend.

LETTER XII.

On Dress.

MY DEAR MARY,

It would be considered a serious omission, were I to leave out of these rules for feminine propriety, some particular strictures on the important subject of dress. A taste for ornamenting the person is either natural to women, or it is inculcated at such an early period as to pass current for

an innate propensity. Habit, in this respect as in others, is second nature. Perhaps there is not a more glaring defect in the prevailing system of female education, than the one which leads, or misleads, our matrons to inoculate their little ones with the epidemic frenzy of personal decoration. They have the false taste to imagine, that decoration adds to infantine and childish beauty; and to gratify this perverted sentiment, they poison the minds of their offspring without reflection.

As this folly prevails chiefly in cities, I would ask those mothers whose lots are cast in those nurseries of dissipation, to consider seriously the consequences resulting from this erroneous estimate of human happiness. In the first place, the pleasure to be derived from this source is of a most impure character, as it arises from the gratification of vanity. The mother, while she is decorating her child, is ministering openly and unequivocally to this bosom sin both in herself and in the little victim of her mistaken fondness.

Every pleasurable emotion enjoyed by either party *must* arise from gratified vanity. But the mother persists in this evil habit until she loses her consciousness of its malignant tendency. It is an undeniable fact, that even gross impropriety ceases to alarm the mind, when it becomes a part of our common course of action. The mental vision, like the outward sense, becomes familiarized to deformity by constant contemplation; rational beings cannot, therefore, be too careful in investigating their own motives of action; they should beware of incorporating tastes and opinions too hastily into their general routine of established and authorized habits. Let them examine *strictly* and *deeply* into the direct and collateral tendency of every passing inclination before they indulge it unscrupulously. There is sometimes a hidden poison in the fairest looking flower.

I have often been called upon by very fond mothers to admire the *industry* which prompted them to cover the

garments of their children with ornamental needle-work ; and again I have heard prudent matrons accused of laziness, or even of want of parental affection, because they bestowed no superfluous labour on their children's clothes. No doubt, you have often heard such *sensible, judicious, far-sighted* remarks as the following : " Surely Mrs. A. must be an indolent woman and an indifferent mother ; for her children are dressed in the plainest manner possible ; not a row of hem-stitching nor scolloping, not a frill nor a flounce ; and her daughters almost grown, too.—Really it gives one but a poor opinion of her heart, to say nothing of her understanding, which ought to prompt a little decent conformity with the most common usages of society." And again, " What a charming, sensible, *industrious* woman Mrs. B. is ; and such a fond mother, too.—There were her little daughters dressed up so beautifully, and all that tedious work on their frocks was done by her own hands, as she herself assured me. She must be a woman of uncommon merit. Those little girls are quite captivating—and they have such womanly manners ; they don't hang their heads and look sheepish in company, like Mrs. A.'s badly brought up children. They looked up when they were spoken to, and answered with so much intelligence. One of them had a row of trimming on her frock more than her sister, and I asked her what was the cause of that difference ? she replied with a bewitching smile, " Oh, mamma gave me that row of work, because I was a better girl than my sister ; and immediately the other little thing hung her head with so much sensibility, and seemed overcome with the most delicate emotion. What a proof of skill in management did Mrs. B. give, by thus turning such a trivial occurrence to an important end. No doubt, those girls will make fine women when they grow up ; I certainly never saw more attractive children. Their mother says she shall spare no pains in giving them the most accomplished educations." So much for this *tirade*.

Girls should be carefully instructed in neatness and *fitness* of apparel. They should be taught to think every expense in dress culpable, that is not strictly authorized by the circumstances of their parents. Some parents are so proud, that they will not suffer their children to mingle in society with those who can afford to dress better than they can; while some are so foolishly vain that they ruin themselves to maintain an equality of appearance with the rich. Both these errors may be avoided by the exertion of a little common sense, or common principle.

Let mothers, with whom these errors too often originate, bring up their daughters with mental qualifications to fit them for the best company, and carefully inculcate economical habits from childhood. Accustom them to regard the distinctions of dress as beneath their rational consideration, and let them go into company to enjoy an intellectual banquet, not to vie with the persons they are to meet in outward decoration. Instruct them to be more ashamed of dressing beyond their circumstances, than of being laggards in fashion and expense. Some parents in moderate circumstances, covet expensive decorations for their children, and contrive to get presents made them, from their richer connexions. This is entirely wrong. A correctly brought up girl will be ashamed to wear any thing that her parents could not have afforded to purchase. She will justly feel, that such an idle vanity will lead the world to cast aspersions upon her own prudence, and what is worse, upon the prudence of those who brought her up. Let her be content to wear such garments as can be procured for her with a safe conscience; that is, without running in debt, or stinting in something more important than apparel.

But it is utterly vain to prescribe *palliatives* for the universal folly of expensive dress. Until women have their minds properly cultivated, and their principles correctly formed, they cannot be expected to reform their evil habits.

Experience may, indeed, lead some of the present generation to abjure these errors, but the great part of those who are most tainted with this disease, will carry it to their graves. Our only hope is, to lay a firmer foundation for moral rectitude and intellectual improvement, in the system of education to be adopted by the rising generation. Let all those who possess influence over their fellow-creatures unite in exerting it both in precept and example, for the benefit of the coming age.

There are so many things inimical to the true interests of women in the prevalent follies of our day, that it cannot surely be *superfluous* to point them out, with the hope of final eradication. There are always two decided classes among those who follow the multitude to do evil: namely, the wilfully blind and the unconsciously ignorant. Let us not despair of drawing over the last mentioned portion to our efficient aid. There are interesting young mothers in the circle of my acquaintance, whose countenances announce so much gentleness and docility that I should not be afraid to address them in the bold, fluent language of affectionate interest. I would say, My dear young friends, you are unconsciously nursing sin in the bosoms of your children. All those *superfluous* decorations only make them more attractive in your eyes, because you view the subject superficially, and only see what appears to be an innocent expression of maternal love; but you surely have more regard for the immortal souls of your children than for their perishing bodies. Be assured, that every time you call your children's attention to the decoration of their bodies, you virtually administer aliment to a nest of serpents in their hearts. You are laying the foundation for many an overt act of folly, and many a secret pang of remorse in their young bosoms. Ask yourselves, if *your* principles have been strengthened, *your* understandings enlightened, *your* affections purified, *your* moral sense cultivated, by the time and attention you

have spent on external decoration? Are you really happier *now*, or have you any surer hopes of happiness *hereafter*, from having sedulously cultivated a fondness for dress? I do not hesitate to answer these interrogations for you in the negative. Then why should you inculcate in your offspring tastes and inclinations so barren of present and future enjoyment? You are cultivating *personal vanity*, one of the proverbial defects of your sex. You are teaching your children a false estimate of human happiness; for it is indubitably certain, that if either *you* or *they* find enjoyment in extrinsic ornament, it *must* be from the gratification of an *unholy* and *irrational* feeling. It is your duty, your first parental duty, to open the sluices of virtuous feeling in the bosoms of your children, and to close, with all your skill, those which are likely to yield only bitter waters.

Are you performing this duty by cultivating a fondness for dress? Assuredly not. But perhaps you are about to say, that you do not mean this taste should grow into a passion. You intend to keep it from penetrating the heart, or becoming one of the ruling principles of action. My dear friends, what right have you to suppose that you can do the work of omnipotence in arresting the current of moral evil, when you have removed the bulwarks that opposed it? Or what right have you to hope that omnipotence will aid you in picking out the seeds of vice which you are wilfully scattering in a soil that you know to be fertile? *Did* you ever, or *can* you ever frame such a prayer for divine aid as would suit your present exigencies? Let us hear how it would sound. "O Lord, I am inculcating a passion for dress in my child, because my maternal fondness delights in seeing it tastefully apparelled; but I pray thee to prevent serious evil from arising out of this natural indulgence of human weakness. Don't let my child grow up frivolous and extravagant, though my present management has a tendency to make her so."

You are doubtless shocked at this form of supplication, and you ought to be still more shocked to think that you have been following a wrong course without any supplication at all. O, my dear young friends, retract your errors at once, and guard your children at every avenue of their hearts, from the deleterious mixture of vanity and self-conceit, concealed under every superfluous ornament about their persons. Tear off those trappings: are the sweet babes less attractive to you without them? O no! *you* love and admire them, perhaps too much, as the Lord made them. Then forbear to add an unnatural and factitious interest to what is already an object of almost an idolatrous feeling.

Look at the subject in another light, my dear friends. Truth obliges me to tell you, that your own hearts are in danger of contamination. You have not so entirely suppressed vanity *at home*, as to make it safe for you to traffic much in this contraband article with others. The admiration bestowed on your children encourages your own self-conceit. Every encomium comes home with almost a direct influence to your own heart.

Beware, or you may be lost in the pleasing labyrinth of self-gratification, and draw the objects of your affection after you to utter ruin. Listen to the voice of reason—hear the arguments of experience—search the Scriptures, and you will be convinced of your error. Life is too short, and eternity too awful, to permit rational beings to trifle thus with their immortal interests. Dress your children plainly. Deny your own vanity the gratification of seeing them adorned, and you will prevent their vanity from growing with their growth and strengthening with their strength. Death takes away many of these little creatures in early years. Can you bear to think, when your infant is wrapped in its last vestment—a *shroud*, of all the needless pains you have taken to adorn the now decaying body? Then allow yourself to think sometimes,

while preparing its living garments, that after all your care and taste, it may soon be called to the plain homely vestment appointed for the chambers of death.

Let us then hope, my dear Mary, that the rising generation will learn to prefer the ornaments of a meek and quiet spirit, to those which certainly do impede the growth of these evangelic attributes. Meantime we will strive to check the triumphant march of that usurper of our rational privileges, denominated "fashion."

To effect even the smallest approximation to this general blessing, will require a strict and cordial union among the disciples of the meek and lowly Jesus. We must exert our combined influence on those veteran sojourners in the tented fields of dissipated life, who have become inured to their own follies. Some of them may yet yield to reason and religion. Some of them may have delicacy enough remaining to listen to appeals like the following: If women *please* by adopting a disgusting or an indelicate costume, it must be by exciting feelings which no modest or refined female can bear to awaken. Another consideration deserves attention—it is this: The woman who attracts attention by excess of expense, or eccentricity of fashion, invariably draws upon her the disapprobation, if not the contempt, of sensible, respectable people. She is *wondered* at, not *admired*. The very circumstance of her seeking that sort of invidious notoriety, inspires her beholders with an unfavourable opinion of her taste, her delicacy, and her principles.

Women of the present day are without the excuse for indulging these follies, which existed in our country some twenty-five or thirty years ago. Personal vanity was then cultivated without a check; and its license did so much gross injury to the sex, that one would suppose the present race of women to be forewarned of its manifold dangers. Those were days of ignorance, which God winked at; but

now the command to repent is sounded far and wide over our gospel favoured land. Religion has arisen, like the fabled Phoenix from her ashes, and ignorance of her holy requisitions is now a wilful, heaven-daring sin. The standard of the gospel is about to be twined with our "star spangled banner," and the charter of our liberties will be sealed with the blood of the atoning sacrifice. We will have no union between church and state; but religion will be the bulwark of our civil rights, because it will teach us the proper way of preserving them. It has been thought doubtful by politicians, whether our form of republican government could endure. The best method of ensuring its duration will be to enlist the Lord of hosts on our side. A religious education will prepare men for becoming good citizens, by teaching them the true value of their political privileges; and restraining those passions which occasion misrule and rebellion, when not subjected to adequate control.

At the commencement of the century in which we live, the Christian religion had sunk to its lowest ebb in our country. Some few families retained a sort of respect for its outward forms, which led them to shrink from the poison of infidelity, then wafted across the Atlantic on the tainted gales of French politics. But the vital spirit of the gospel was unknown and unsought among the southern people of America. Young ladies were allowed, and even encouraged to read works which breathed the fatal spirit of infidelity. Voltaire's writings were much in vogue, and the numerous imitators of his pestilent doctrines, poured forth their venom upon the world.

But the time will soon come, when all those daring theorists will be remembered only as the enemies of virtue and happiness. Their short-lived fame is already tarnished by the discovery that their opinions are fatal to the peace and happiness of mankind. The enemies of religion are indeed the enemies of the whole race of man. They would take

from their fellow beings the sole remedy provided by omnipotent mercy for the variety of ills which constitute the inheritance of man. They would shut out the healing stream from the diseased and dying in this world, and close for ever the golden gates of heaven upon the toil worn pilgrims, who have faltered through their appointed course of earthly trials, and *might* be entitled to a blessed inheritance above.

There is something appalling to the imagination in the contemplation of Voltaire's last moments. Yet it is a picture which should be hung up for exhibition before the congregated world. What unutterable horrors pervaded his soul, when it received its final summons to appear before its Maker and its judge. He was discovered by his attendant with a book of prayers in his hand, endeavouring, with a faltering tongue, to repeat some of the petitions for mercy, addressed to that Being, whose name he had blasphemed. He had fallen from his bed in convulsive agonies, and lay foaming with impotent despair on the floor, exclaiming, "Will not this God, whom I have denied, save me too? Cannot infinite mercy extend to me?" Awful spectacle! Where was then the fame for which he had laboured? the applause which had been as the breath of his nostrils? Where were the hollow hearted flatterers whose faithless professions of friendship had deceived him in prosperity? Alas, they were the first to forsake him in the hour of misery! His last moments were attended solely by a hired menial, who is said to have inquired, when next applied to in her professional capacity, Whether the gentleman who wanted her services was a *philosopher*? For she declared herself unable to stand the horror of another scene like the death bed of Voltaire, and would rather forego the emolument than engage in such an arduous and soul-appalling duty.

What must have been the condition of that departed spirit, when the dread realities of the future burst upon its

unobstructed vision? When the awful throne of an insulted Sovereign rose in sublime majesty before the immortal soul, on its entrance into eternity! When the first object it beheld, in the dread realms of futurity, was the Being whose existence he had denied, whose cause he had persecuted! And that Being enthroned in omnipotence as his final Judge! Let us draw a veil over the terrific spectacle.

I will conclude this long epistle, my dear Mary, by relating an anecdote, which I think will interest you. A gentleman of extreme good sense and piety had the misfortune to find his only daughter, whose education he had entrusted to a sister of his deceased wife, so much perverted by infidelity and fashionable folly, that he dreaded to think of her probable destiny. He had been engaged abroad, for many years, in the service of his country, and on his return he took home his daughter, to preside as mistress of an elegant establishment. The young lady was enchanted to find a dressing room prepared in the true Parisian taste, with an ample proportion of mirrored surface. The walls were painted with scenes taken from Telemachus, and over every group of figures was a scroll containing wreaths of flowers and mottos. These inscriptions were printed in reversed sentences, which could only be read as they were reflected in the mirrors. They were selected from the Bible, and contained such admonitions as the following: "Commune with your own heart, in your chamber, and be still." "Be ye not conformed to this world." "Keep yourself unspotted from the world." The young votary of fashion was at first highly displeased with these unseasonable admonitions; but as her father imposed no personal restraint upon her, she determined to disregard her silent monitors. By insensible degrees, however, she became fond of studying the meaning of these sentences. They met her eye continually in her most listless languid moments. Conscience at length took part with these strange advisers, and the Father had

soon the pleasure of seeing his daughter a sterling Christian, by the deliberate conviction of her own reason, and consent of her own heart.

Farewell.

LETTER XIII.

Promiscuous Dancing Assemblies.

MY DEAR MARY,

Such questions as the following are now frequently asked of the professors of religion: Do you really think dancing a sinful amusement? Are you not falling into a pernicious extreme, when you require young converts, to resign so many of the amusements common to youth? Such recreations, too, as are no way incompatible with strict morality? Will you not injure the cause of religion, by this *over strictness*?

To these interrogatories the advocates of Christianity, can only reply, That they do not presume to impose *their own judgments* upon the world, as rules of propriety. That in forming their opinions on the subject of fashionable amusements, they have been guided solely by the Scriptures, having obeyed a divine mandate in searching those holy records for a knowledge of the requisitions of Christianity. I would say to any young lady who might reproach me for thinking *balls* injurious to the vital spirit of religion: My dear girl, I do not condemn them on my own authority. It is the Bible that teaches me the incompatibility of such recreations with the cultivation of a devotional spirit. If you can conscientiously indulge yourself in these amusements, after diligently searching the holy Records, and prayerfully endeavouring to understand the will of God, as there revealed to his crea-

tures; if you can comprehend the divine laws in their full, spiritual interpretation, and yet think yourself safe in following the *world* to its appropriate haunts, surely no one can pretend to censure your practice. But at the same time I must warn you that there is danger of your being misled in your investigations by the advice of worldly friends. They *cannot* be proper judges, and therefore they must not be received as umpires in this question. Again I say, search the Scriptures, what is the meaning of this precept among many similar ones? “Be ye not conformed to this world, but be ye *transformed* by the renewing of your mind, that you may *prove* what is that good, and acceptable, and holy will of God.” I understand the first part of this sentence to mean, that Christians are to avoid worldly *practices*; that is, they are to give up such things as unfit their hearts for the enjoyment of holy feelings, and devout aspirations; and they must not only do this, but they must be *transformed* by the renewing of their minds. That is, they must undergo a change or *transformation* from their natural state, the result of which will be the introduction of new tastes and inclinations. At first they shrink from conformity with the world, because they are required to do so; afterwards they become so changed that this conformity ceases to be agreeable. The Spirit of God brings about this change upon those who show a willingness to abide by the imperative precept. If they cavil at, or reject this precept, the Spirit *will not renew their hearts*. But if they yield entire submission to a plain and clear direction, they are rewarded by finding all unwillingness removed from their minds, and a full and perfect acquiescence of their own will, with the will of God, produced by divine operation.

When this comes to pass, they *prove*, by their own personal experience, the sweetness and perfection of that holy will.

But when professors of religion begin by endeavouring to

establish their own interpretation of this precept of non conformity; when they obviously shrink from its full meaning, and slide in their own exceptions to each prohibitory mandate, they are obviously not entitled to the aid of the Spirit in renewing their minds. For example, the lover of dancing affirms that she does not consider *balls* as included in the prohibition of worldly conformity; the theatre-going professor claims immunity for her favourite amusement. Thus each person, according to her particular tastes and propensities, rescues her favourite pursuit from the charge of being an unscriptural degree of conformity with the world. When all these exceptions are aggregated, we shall next discover that the rule itself may be set aside as altogether nugatory; for if each person claims a right to follow her favourite pursuit, the injunction "not to be conformed to the world," is of little avail in restraining worldly folly.

Thus we find Christians still anxious to follow carnal pleasures, because they have not been transformed in the renewing of their minds, and have not *proved* the will of God in this respect to be good and perfect. But when professors shew a willingness to deny themselves what has not yet ceased to be agreeable, they will in due time find their worldly desires subdued by the Spirit of God. We are prepared to expect that some sacrifices will be required of us, for the religion of Christ is a *self-denying* religion. I should be forced to tell the young lady who accused me of over strictness in prohibiting balls, that I must refer her to the Scripture for my objections to that degree of worldly conformity which she affects to think innocent.

I *have* had real arguments with such persons, my dear Mary. I have endeavoured to inure them to the plain truth of Scripture; and they have, as you may conjecture, evaded my arguments in sport, or repelled them in anger.

Yet I would not again object to undertake an office fraught with such important consequences. Can the disciple of

Christianity deliberately affirm, that she takes dancing parties into her regular plan of Christian practice? I fancy, she would shrink from such an inconsistency. And yet she would be offended at being asked if she was without a plan of life—a system of religious discipline.

I grant that the pursuit of selfish pleasure is *natural*, for self is the idol of the unrenewed heart. But the Christian professes to have overthrown that Dagon, and substituted in its place the legitimate possessor of his affections. We must then prove which of our pleasures are really selfish, and which tend to glorify God. Few will deny the influence of dissipation in unnerving the heart and mind. Few will attempt to defend *excess* in the pursuit of pleasure. Alas! there are monuments before our eyes in the exhibition room of the public, which too forcibly remind us of this truth. They show how the soul can persist in plunging deeper and deeper into those habits which palsy its noblest powers, and unfit it for the service of its Maker. They have gone through life in the pursuit of the veriest baubles of this unsubstantial scene. Life is to them but a succession of worn-out follies and exhausted pleasures, the very dregs of which suffice to nourish the little vitality that remains to them. They have preyed on garbage until they have lost all relish for wholesome nutriment.

But we must inquire, What was the commencement of this evil? Every thing has a beginning. Why, my young friends, I must say to those who are advocating their favourite amusement; they set out from the very point about which you are now contending. Satan had no other vantage ground in attacking them at first but the very disputed spot on which you stand. Doubtless they too thought themselves secure of not exceeding the *evangelical* limits of pleasure; those imaginary boundaries, for which so many are now contending. Ah! he well knows that if he can but get the untried soul to verge on his forbidden region; to stretch

forth even a thought, or a wish, towards his allotted portion of worldly enjoyments, he has much cause to anticipate a final triumph. These are fearful thoughts, my dear Mary.

Christ came to save that which was lost. But he will not save us after our own plan. He will not leave us precisely in the same spot where he found us. Oh no! that were a vain, a futile hope. We must follow him to his own ground, and agree to abide with him for the rest of our lives. Where did he find some of us? Immersed in worldly pleasures. What portion of those pleasures does he allow us to take with us on the road to Heaven as provision for our journey towards the Jordan of death? Certainly, only such as are favourable to the growth of that holiness, without which no man can see the Lord. We can carry no contraband articles into the narrow road which leadeth to salvation. As prudent travellers in that road, it becomes us to examine our resources, and cast out whatever is unsuited to the place. Napoleon set up a theatre in the midst of the conflagration of Moscow. Have we any time for vain unprofitable amusements, when we know the uncertainty of life and the certainty of a future state?

Suppose a band of travellers, journeying together towards a place where they had centred all their hopes of happiness; two or three journey on and never turn aside; their thoughts are too much occupied to be diverted by the baubles and glittering things circulating around them. Two or three others, however, must pause a little, and turn aside—for what? asks their alarmed company. “Oh, only to partake a very innocent amusement; you see those handsomely drest people yonder, convened together for a dancing party; the scene is so exhilarating, that we must join it.” “But,” say the sober travellers, “we shall get before you, for we cannot stop; besides, you will be away at the time when we all unite in worshipping God. We shall miss you at his altar.” “Oh no! you must pray for us;” say the ball-goers. “What,

pray for those who are doing an unnecessary thing at the very season allotted for prayer! that would exceed our privilege. No! If you were serving God at some dangerous post we would intercede for you; but you are going where you must forget him for a time in selfish gratification. Besides, you are conforming to the world." "Oh! no, no—we deny that—farewell—we shall come back to you in safety." The travellers move on in sadness; for who can be otherwise than sad while thinking of a fellow creature in danger or in sin. The solemn season of prayer approaches, and these sanctified spirits pour forth their effusions in peace and joy. They breathe an aspiration for their heedless companions, and pray that the Holy Ghost may visit their hearts with his transforming power, and cleanse them from carnal desires. But this night which came over them, like any other season of rest and darkness, may be the time appointed for the marriage supper of the Lamb. At midnight a cry is sounded, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh." The watchers start from their tranquil rest, and are ready at their post of duty. They enter with their Master, and as the doors are closing, many tender thoughts turn back towards the deserters from their company. Alas! where are those heedless revellers? What are their present feelings, surfeited with pleasure, and wearied with senseless mirth? They are perhaps tottering homewards, languid, listless and unsatisfied; they begin to lend an ear to the still, small voice of conscience, whose whispers had been hitherto drowned in the noise of revelry, or repressed by the eager throbbings of palpitating mirth. They at length arrive. But alas! the doors are closed upon them, and they strive in vain to enter. "Were you not enjoined to watch?" asks a spectator. "Were you not forewarned, that you would not know the precise hour of your Master's arrival? Sure that was enough to have kept you in place, if you really wished to be the followers of the Lamb." But words avail

nothing; facts are plain and convincing. These foolish virgins deserted their post of duty, and lost their promised bliss, by neglecting the admonitions of divine wisdom. In other language, they *went to a dancing party*. And surely no one will pretend to say, that diseases and death never come to such places. The dress, the food, the drink, the air, the hour, the sort of exercise, the train of thought, the style of conversation, and every other imaginable concomitant of such places, is inimical to the health of the body, and the prosperity of the soul.

But some people say, that other parties of pleasure are as bad as balls. That assemblies where dancing is prohibited, are not at all more moral or intellectual than balls. Well, granting that scandal is sometimes talked and mischief promulgated at *sitting* parties; still it appears very practicable to make such parties profitable. People meet together at them for the express purpose of making use of their intellectual powers, and solacing themselves with social intercourse. It may happen that these purposes are sometimes rendered abortive by the folly or vice of one or two persons; but yet I must affirm, that there is less expense, less display, less emulation among the members of an ordinary meeting for social enjoyment, than at a ball. There is always an opportunity for rational conversation among sensible people, for their voices are not drowned by the uproar of music and dancing, nor their ideas jostled out of all order by the convulsive movements of their bodies. If *sitting* parties, as they are called, are not agreeable and even profitable places of resort considered merely as relaxations, it must be because the society which composes them is radically bad. For rational conversation is always in their power, as their meeting is expressly designed for the harmonious interchange of thought and feeling. It seems, on the other hand, that scandal is the appropriate interlude of dancing; for the degree of excitement attendant on that sort of exercise is

certainly favourable to the careless random expression of every irregular thought; and unfavourable to the calm, steady employment of the rational powers. The high tone of gaiety; the exuberant flow of animal spirits; the wild flight of thought, which seems to float unconnectedly on the winged sounds of the musical instruments, as if reason had purposely removed every barrier, and broken down every restraint usually imposed on the powers under her direction: all these symptoms of misrule and disorder in the mental department, will be found to attend parties professedly for dancing. And surely to one who has analyzed his own feelings at such a season, it must be apparent, that frequent indulgences of such a nature, would resemble licensed fits of mental distraction, and permitted aberrations of reason in their effects upon the intellectual region of man.

Who would like to be summoned from the ball-room to his final audit? What belle would be reconciled to the idea that she was suddenly to exchange the elaborate decorations of her ball night, and the affluent magnificence of her dancing apparel, for her last garment, the shroud?

And ought a rational creature voluntarily to enter a situation from which he would be particularly unwilling to meet his final doom? What young lady would not shrink with horror from the idea of falling dead in a cotillon or a waltz? Surely sudden death in any other situation could not be equally appalling.

It might be said that other situations, (such as we have mentioned, as sometimes contrasted with balls,) would be as unfavourable scenes for the sudden close of life. But I cannot admit this reasoning. A young lady, for instance, may go to a *sitting* party with the rational design of spending an evening in intelligent conversation. She may join a group of really amiable, highly cultivated people, and if she desires improvement, she may glean no inconsiderable portion of it from refined and intellectual society. It is true

—a spontaneous service. It is, indeed, the very atmosphere of the Christian's soul; he can breathe freely in no other, and the lamp of faith burns brightly only when exposed to its vivifying influence. So far from being an irksome duty, which is omitted whenever excuses serve; it so dear and valuable a privilege, that every thing that interrupts it is to be deprecated. One reason why Christians object so decidedly to balls and plays is, that these amusements occupy those hours usually and naturally allotted to devotional exercises. No mere sensual or earthly pleasure can compensate for the privation of even one hour of this coveted employment. The Christian, who goes to a ball or a play, must make a deliberate renunciation of his accustomed season of communion with his God; and he derives too much peace and happiness from that occupation, to be willing to exchange it for the purest earthly pleasure. It might, indeed, be urged as an inducement, that it was only for *one night* that this sacrifice would be required, and that he might return to his devotions on the next night without impediment; but the real disciple of Christ has the shortness and uncertainty of life constantly before his eyes: death is not so terrible a thing to him, as to cause him always to shrink from its contemplation. He might truly say, "I know not what a night may bring forth. If I omit prayer now, I may never live to see another devotional season. No, I cannot leave the altar of my God for the service of the world, even for a single evening." People who speak of worldly pleasures as being so hard to relinquish, are, in truth, acquainted with no others. If they *were*, they would not complain as they do, of the hardship of requiring Christians to give up worldly enjoyments.

Prayer is the only shield which can repel the fiery darts of temptation; the only weapon with which the soul can effectually resist the destroyer. It is the impenetrable breastplate of the righteous, and a key to the treasury of

heaven. It is the lever which raises the soul from earth to a near contemplation of the glories of heaven. Faith shews us what we want, and tells us who will gratify our wants. Prayer brings us at once within supplicating distance. The Holy Spirit teaches us to pray. Without that instructor, we could not hope to be heard, even for our much speaking. Prayer is indeed an awful business to those whose souls are not imbued with the Holy Spirit ; but to the favoured child of adoption, the language of supplication is as sweet and familiar as household words. Is the soul happy ? It delights in praise and thanksgiving. Is it enthralled by sin ? Christ came to save sinners, even the chief. Is it dark with human sorrow ? There is one who has said, " Call upon me in the hour of trouble, and I will help you." Does it need any thing ? Christ has said, in plain terms, "*Ask*, and ye shall receive." Has it lost any thing ? He expressly says, " Seek and ye shall find." Does it long for the divine presence ? Let it knock, and the door shall be opened to it. Lastly, Is it weary and heavy laden, either with sin or sorrow ? Let it " come unto him who can give it rest."

The Apostle says, " Pray without ceasing." " Continue instant in prayer." This obviously does not mean, that the Christian should be *always* on his knees, and shut up from society ; but it means that the spirit of devotion should be always alive and active, so that the silent thoughts can recur continually to the ever present God, without hindrance to the movements of the body, or the labour of the hands.

In your accustomed seasons of devotion, let your sense of indwelling sin be strong and humiliating. Never seek to attain self-complacency, nor fancy that your prayers are rejected, because you feel an abiding sense of weakness and helplessness. While we have this, we are in no danger of trying to stand alone. The child that has never walked across the room without aid, is so much afraid of falling,

that it will not relinquish its mother's hand. This child-like spirit of dependence is a very safe feeling for Christians of all ages.

Remember the injunction to persevere in prayer, for in due time you shall reap if you faint not. Any thing and every thing is salutary that keeps up a prayerful spirit, and brings us often to a throne of grace. This is the true reason why adversity increases our piety. When we have a burden to bear, or a blessing to obtain, we come often and eagerly to ask it : when we are full of the good things of life, we are apt to stay among them too much, and neglect a better occupation. Beware of thinking that your prayers are rejected, before you have sufficient proof of the fact. The very means that the Lord sometimes takes to accomplish our wishes, may have a contrary aspect at the first glance. Thus if we pray for any spiritual blessing, the preparation of soul necessary to introduce it, may appear to us like taking away the little share of that particular grace that we had before. For instance, we pray for humility, and by and by, we are assailed by such bitter mortifications of soul, that we think ourselves doomed to incessant strivings of the adverse spirit. After a time, however, we begin to feel something like a dawn of the good feeling we were seeking. Our late conflicts of soul have subsided, and the circumstances that occasioned them have proved favourable to the growth of humility. Young Christians are not aware that the virtues they pray for, will not come at once and settle down without a struggle in the unpropitious region of their hearts. When they feel the strivings of the spirit within them, they are undergoing the preparatory exercises of the very grace they have been asking. When the fallow ground has been plowed up, the good seed scattered, and the early and latter rain has fallen, it will be soon enough to look for the harvest time.

Many ask importunately, and do not obtain, because they

ask amiss. Christians sometimes abuse their privileges. They have such confidence in the goodness of their heavenly Father, and such faith in the efficacy of prayer, that they waste time and energy in soliciting what heavenly wisdom still withholds, because it would be an improper and an unsafe possession. It is always better to strive for patient submission to present evils, than to supplicate their removal. Had they not been necessary trials, God would not have sent them, (for he never afflicts his people unnecessarily,) and being really intended to answer some good purpose, we should endeavour to bear them patiently. Ask for a submissive spirit, and leave it to infinite wisdom to decide whether your trials have wrought their intended effect upon your character or not. If they *have*, he will remove them of himself; if they have *not*, be assured he will not do his work negligently. Our murmurings under an appointed burden, are much more likely to make its continuance necessary, than to occasion its removal.

Some Christians are impatient under circumstances which do not give sufficient scope to their energies. They are ready to exclaim, "I have no opportunity of doing good, though my desires are great." Depend on it, the Lord knows best what is suited to our capacities. If he gives us little *outward* work to do, it is a sign that we have much to control and arrange *within*. Perhaps our obvious duties are disagreeable, and we pine after others more congenial. Now we are in the very situation to acquire the virtue of self-denial, which is precious in the Lord's sight. He no doubt put us there expressly for that purpose. Let us therefore cheerfully submit, and make the best of our adverse lot.

My dear Mary will, I trust, be willing to profit by these hints from

Her affectionate friend.

LETTER XVI.

On Economy.

MY DEAR MARY,

One of the duties peculiarly incumbent upon your sex, in most situations of life, is the direction of domestic expenditures. Economy is both a virtue and an art; but in either view, it is a dignified and important branch of female excellence.

Perhaps there is no *household* accomplishment so little cultivated in Virginia, as a methodical arrangement of family expenses. Young ladies are generally brought up in utter ignorance of pecuniary transactions. The peculiar difficulties attendant on most southern establishments, occasions culpable neglect of these branches of female education. The heads of families themselves often omit regular details of domestic expenditures, and therefore it cannot be expected that young girls should understand what is neither inculcated by precept or example. Such terrible consequences have arisen from these flagrant omissions, that the southern people are beginning to recant their errors; and it is earnestly to be hoped, that the rising generation will diligently cultivate the virtue of domestic economy.

I think it absolutely necessary that girls should be skilful needle women, and also expert in the tailorlike arts of cutting and fitting. They should peactise millinery a little, at least so far as will enable them to dress their own bonnets, and occasionally to make these necessary articles for themselves or their friends. I know some deserving girls, who save a considerable sum yearly to their families, by practising this art in their own domestic circles. In cities particularly, where a frequent use of such articles occasions considerable expense, young ladies should always learn to *do up* and dress

their own head gear. They should do all their own needle work, besides aiding, as circumstances may require, in the work of the family generally. Let no one suppose that these requisitions are unreasonable, or that they encroach too much on the department of mental improvement. Girls who rise early, and employ their time methodically, will find the day sufficiently long for all rational purposes. There is but one admissible excuse for being in bed after sunrise, and that is, an actual inability to rise from it, because of sickness.

I am sorry to say, that many young ladies contrive to waste a great deal of time in dressing; that is, in the mere act of putting on their clothes. Do not overlook this error, because it is apparently trifling. Many people think lightly of faults that cannot be construed into positive lapses of morality; but this is a great mistake. Small errors, of constant, or of frequent recurrence, make up, collectively, enough to detract seriously from the sum of moral worth. Suppose you were in the habit of taking half an hour every day in dressing, without having ever considered that you might do this daily business as well in half the time. Just make a calculation of the time to be saved by abridging this operation, and ask yourself if you have been *guiltless* in hitherto persisting in such a waste of life? I am sure such a reflection would fill you with self-condemnation. Then go on with the supposition, that the time so thrown away might have been spent in study, in needle-work, in visiting the sick, in earning money for charity, and, best of all, in *prayer*. Do you not think it worth while to make a little exertion at once to redeem your future days from such an unnecessary abridgement, and to spend the redeemed time in some one of the improving ways already suggested?

There are many other ways, besides this, of economising time, which a little reflection would make known to us. Each individual in the world has some prevailing mode of

shortening existence, which perhaps has never been scrutinized or opposed. Some loiter habitually at every species of labour, so as to dilate the simplest task, until it occupies twice or thrice the requisite portion of time. Some others get over their successive operations quickly enough, but they make intervals between each employment, by pausing a little, merely from habit, when no rest is necessary. All these little defects may be corrected with so much ease, and with so much benefit to individual characters, that it surely cannot be right to live on, regardless of such practicable and easy modes of improving morals and prolonging life.

Time is money, according to Dr. Franklin; and I have often wondered to see so many really good people squander this precious possession in so many unconscious ways.

It should be the object of *teachers*, not only to instruct their pupils in the usual branches of learning, but in the methodical distribution of time. Some teachers suffer their scholars to acquire strange tedious methods of getting their lessons, and never seem to calculate on the time so wasted. Surely there are compendious methods of doing all things; and these should be taught regularly, as an important branch of education. Little children should be watched in their earliest attempts at serious occupation, and a foundation laid for future habits of diligence and celerity.

With regard to the economy of *money*, a few simple rules will suffice. Young ladies should always have a specific allowance, a tenth part of which should be scrupulously appropriated to charitable purposes. This is so seldom practised in Virginia families, that perhaps most parents will adhere to their old customs in this particular. The expenses should be proportioned to the circumstances, as the shoe to the foot. Vid. Epictetus Ench. But I do not hesitate to affirm, that the pecuniary derangements so common at this time among us, has arisen from an utter neglect of this precaution. Girls are allowed to spend, not in proportion to their

father's income, but in proportion to their own wishes, and his measure of indulgence; they keep no accounts, and cannot even guess at the year's end, how much they have expended in dress. Surely this is a bad way of preparing women to manage for themselves in the arduous post of *second* head of a family. I know ready money is often scarce in Virginia families; but if fathers cannot put *cash* into the hands of their daughters, let them at least make a calculation of what portion of their income can be allowed to each daughter, and require her to keep her expenses within those bounds. Let every article be valued, and the aggregate sum be made known at the end of the year. I feel certain that some young ladies, who now think themselves great economists, (because they keep no accounts,) would find, on examination, that they spend more than they think they do, more than is really necessary, and more than their parents can afford.

Virginia girls indulge themselves in many superfluities. Their wardrobes are much larger than they ought to be. They purchase new clothes, not when they really want them, but when they see any thing attractive in the stores, or on their neighbours. Thus they accumulate useless apparel, until their supply becomes redundant, and they distribute its superfluities among the poor girls of the neighbourhood, thereby feeding the passion of vanity, and exciting expensive desires in their fellow creatures.

I once heard a lady extolled over a whole neighbourhood for having given ball dresses, from her old hoards, to five or six poor girls. I verily believe this act of thoughtless profusion gained more real praise, than the comfortable clothing of double the number of helpless poor would have done.

You should be careful, my dear Mary, how you give to the poor girls around you, such things as may nourish a taste for finery. This mischief making passion has destroyed as many women as the vice of drunkenness has destroyed men. From the highest to the lowest, its influence has

been extending ever since I knew the world. In cities particularly, this insidious evil sheds its poison in almost every bosom. You cannot ascertain the degree of wealth really existing in a family from the style of dress prevailing within its precincts. On the contrary, those who can least afford these extravagant habits, are often the most eager to conceal their real condition from the world, by closely copying the style of their superiors in wealth. To look on the females congregated for purposes of fashionable amusement, you would suppose that the most perfect equality existed in their pecuniary circumstances; when perhaps (if truth could be divulged) some of them have stinted their families in real comforts, or plunged their unhappy parents into *debt*, by the purchase of their decorations for that very occasion.

Alas, when will the female sex acquire magnanimity enough to practise rational economy, and to brave the opinions of foolish people, by ceasing to emulate their superiors in wealth.

But the mania of fashion is almost universal. Many persons are going at large in the world at this time, whose minds are as effectually alienated from reason by this absorbing passion, as those of the tenants of the lunatic hospital. This Moloch of cities has his hecatombs yearly sacrificed on his altars, and is worshipped by creatures formed for better things.

Oh, could women rescue their reason from the dominion of this tyrant, how brightly might they shine in their appointed sphere of action, shedding forth light and warmth upon the hallowed circle of domestic peace, fostering virtue in their quiet dominions, and imparting the dearest enjoyments and richest blessings of life to their companions in bondage!

But with such fair opportunities for usefulness, they fly off like comets from their appointed orbits, and threaten

destruction to the whole social system. One of these wandering stars carries mischief and confusion in her train. She sheds a mildew upon the intellects of her followers, far worse in its consequences, than the fairy spells in which our progenitors believed. A woman who is spell bound in the circle of fashion, has literally thrown off the dominion of reason. All her thoughts are governed by a specious refinement in folly, which passes current for *exclusive* propriety among her admirers. She is quoted among her satellites as the umpire of taste. They feed her upon flattery, until she becomes like the queen bee, a different sort of animal from the rest of her species. She passes through life without ever having known its real pleasures, and sinks into the grave before she has made the discovery, "that from dust she sprung, and to dust she must return." Her thoughts have never descended so low, as to touch the surface of that earth, in the bosom of which she is destined to find a home.

Religion alone teaches man the nature of his compound being. Half dust, half deity, the mystery of his existence defies all lights, save that of revelation. Philosophy (which by the by can only be attained by the chosen few) refers only to the nature of the soul. It teaches man to moralize on the nature of his immortal part, and gives him rules for governing the subtle essence of thought, without referring to the constant counter action of the mortal frame. Were man all soul, philosophy would suit him admirably; but as the case really stands, something more is requisite than philosophy professes to teach. Religion provides for the combined exigencies of soul and body. While it makes use of the mind, it refers constantly to the mortal part of man. It provides rules and restraints for those propensities which, springing from the sensual department, yet involve inextricably the intellectual principle. Religion never loses sight of mortality, but labours to supply aid to

mortal weakness, while it affords light and strength to the imperishable essence of the soul. All its regulations refer to both parts of man's compound being, providing equally for the two dissimilar, but indissolubly united constituents of human existence. And well it is, that God has designed to furnish his creatures with laws adapted to their peculiar exigencies. He alone could have created man, and he alone can teach his creatures the true purposes of their existence.

May these few serious reflections, draw you on to others equally important, my dear Mary.

Believe me your true friend.

LETTER XVII.

Importance of Little Things.

MY DEAR MARY,

It is a maxim with some people to disregard trifles, and truly there is considerable wisdom in one application of this rule. Many persons aggravate their allotted trials, by magnifying slight causes of annoyance, until they make up a serious sum of additional evils. Thus we sometimes see females so full of superfluous fears and morbid anxieties, that they can scarcely be said to enjoy life at all. One is thrown into convulsions of terror by the sight of a mouse, or a spider. Another mars all the enjoyment of a rural ramble in summer, by her dread of encountering a serpent in the grass. Some country girls are afraid to pass through a field, where cattle are quietly grazing. Others are so much afraid of lightning, that the whole summer passes over without being enjoyed by them.

Now these *trifles*, as they are thought by those who

indulge them, are in my opinion of sufficient importance to be subjected to the control of reason. It is one of the curses denounced upon the wicked in Scripture, "to be afraid where no fear is." I know some ladies who are so much terrified in a carriage, that it is a pity they should ever need such a method of transportation.

But there are other trifles which sometimes annoy fastidious ladies exceedingly. They are overcome with disgust upon any little breach of delicacy or refinement in the unpolished part of society. They have their comfort destroyed by a peculiar tone of voice, or mode of expression. Some of their associates are given to certain freedoms of speech or manner, which overwhelm them with disagreeable sensations. These delicate, sensitive people, cannot endure to witness human suffering. A fellow creature might be in the last agonies, and they would leave them to expire unaided, rather than undergo the least suffering on his account. It is true, that these evils arise from small beginnings; but that very reason aggravates, instead of extenuating the folly of those who indulge them. For if the propensity is slight at the commencement, it is the more easy to subdue.

But self-indulgence is natural to the unrenewed heart. Those persons whose sensibilities are easily excited, shrink from such scenes as are calculated to excite them, without being aware that duty requires them to subjugate these unreasonable excesses of feeling. Women are in their proper sphere, when they are alleviating human suffering by administering remedies to disease or soothing, the bed of sickness by tender and watchful attentions.

When they shrink from these appropriate duties, on the plea of inordinate sensibility, they are practising culpable self-indulgence. A little exertion at first, will overcome these excesses of sympathetic feeling, and qualify the gentle and tender sex for performing offices of infinite importance to their suffering fellow beings.

I have known women whose appearance indicated the extreme of feminine delicacy, and even cowardice, who could vie with the most robust men in ministering to sickness and suffering. These females no doubt commenced their career of usefulness by steadily denying themselves the indulgence of their sensibilities, and practising severe self-command when their sympathies were excited.

But I will allow, that there are other *trifles* in this world, which it behoves us to cater carefully as legitimate means of enjoyment. These are sometimes overlooked by those very persons who allow themselves to be discomposed by trifling causes of discontent. Women may add materially to the sum of earthly happiness, by gleaning up those small sweet courtesies of life, which often escape the notice of ambitious spirits.

Trifles may exhilarate the spirits, and move the soul to a moderate degree of mirthful enjoyment. Trifles may unlock the fountain of human sympathies, and call forth refined and delicate sensations. A beautiful flower, a refreshing breeze, a summer shower dimpling the crystal stream, or the hush of its falling drops on the broad leaves of the forest, may awaken feelings of exquisite enjoyment.

The calm beauties of a summer sunset, the appearance of the blue heavens reflected in some immeasurable depth of waters, the evening song of birds, or the vivid freshness of dewy morning—these, and the thousand tender thoughts that sweep through the soul when we meet with those we love, and hear the first greetings of affection,—even the circle around the hearth in winter, which gives a home breathing sense of confiding affection: All these, and more than my pen can pourtray, are among the trifles which we may legitimately covet, with the more important blessings of life. There is no merit in rejecting these minor pleasures. They are destined to fill up the blanks inevitably occurring in our catalogue of earthly joys. They keep up a perennial

flow of gratitude to heaven, in the heart that recognizes the omnipotent Being as the author of all its blessings. They are the *small change* of happiness, and should be counted among the golden ingots of prosperous life.

Remember then, dear Mary, that true Christian philosophy prompts us to pass over all obnoxious trifles, and to gather up those that belong to human happiness. They are but fragments from some divided blessing, and are as valuable as the diamond sparks that fall from the chisel of the lapidary. No particle of genuine good should be lost, where evil is ever abounding. Let nothing escape you, in catering for those you love, my dear girl. I have known happiness most skilfully imparted by some of those genuine spirits, whose benevolence is always awake, to the sick and the low spirited, by a careful selection of these unobtrusive occurrences.

Some persons have a keen perception of the ridiculous, which enables them to extract amusement from trifling absurdities. This talent is not desirable; for it is usually united with unamiable qualities. Yet it is natural for even the good-humoured and benevolent to laugh at a ridiculous occurrence, though it may place a beloved person in ludicrous circumstances. But the good-tempered will only laugh spontaneously; the ill-natured will drain the joke to the very dregs; and enjoy it the more when they see it gives pain to others. Nothing can be a surer indication of an unamiable heart, than a propensity to dwell on disagreeable subjects, before those to whom we know they will give pain. Some will do this, even to their friends. But a good heart will shrink from inflicting pain on an open and declared enemy. May these remarks prove both agreeable and useful to you, dear Mary: be assured they come from

Your true friend.

LETTER XVIII.

Sabbath Privileges.

MY DEAR MARY,

And who shall say to the children of God, that the day especially appointed for heavenly communion, is a day of tedium and weariness? That the season of holy rest from the toils and perplexities of life is unwelcome to the way-worn pilgrim?

None, surely, but those whose hearts have never glowed under the influence of divine love, nor felt the blissful security of heavenly protection. But the Christian feels in his heart's core, the obligation due to infinite mercy, for the institution of the Sabbath. His spirits are invigorated by a constant dependance on that mercy, and he delights in the full, free exercise of all his spiritual prerogatives. As the adopted child of the Most High Being, he enters his Father's presence with holy joy, for it is there only that he fully participates in the high and holy privileges annexed to his peculiar condition. To unregenerate beings, these feelings are utterly incomprehensible. We might as reasonably call on the blind man to admire the hues of the rainbow, as on the unconverted man to participate in our religious enjoyments. These things are spiritually discerned; and until the voice of Omnipotence exclaims, as at the creation, "Let there be light!" the mental vision is without the power of perception. Some Christians reproach their unbelieving friends for not enjoying the Sabbath. Alas! they should rather pity the state of the unregenerate, and intercede on their behalf in their privileged seasons of communion with their God. That dread insensibility to holy things, which pervades the unconverted soul, should awaken our keenest sympathy. Most of us can remember when we ourselves

endured the same self-inflicted desolation. All of us should reflect, that the work of regeneration, which we have experienced, was an especial and unmerited mercy. The same God can, in his own time, call others from darkness into light as he called us. This mercy we can still hope for and pray for, when we are inclined to despond over the benighted state of those we love. Our's is the religion of hope, and every address to heaven recalls to our minds the full value of the unspeakable gift we have received, and awakens a trust which banishes every preconceived cause of fear, either for ourselves or for others.

Man, in his natural state, has a *will* confined and limited like his essence, to his own identity, preferring *itself* to all the world, and to God himself. From this distinct, selfish will of the creature, arises both natural and moral evil. Its constant craving after the gratifications of its instinctive wants, produces those passions which deform the human character, and which produce (where they operate) a state of anarchy and misery resembling the punishment of the wicked in another world. But when God, in his mercy, condescends to instil into his creatures any portion of his own benign and virtuous will, he calls forth their affections from self, and diffuses them over a wider circle. By this process of diffusion, they are gradually meliorated and sweetened, until they become sources of rational enjoyment.

Short-sighted reason is apt to wonder, that an omnipotent and infinitely merciful being should have suffered moral evil to deform this fair creation ; but when we recollect that the chief end of this very creation is to glorify its Author, our wonder must cease. Had it not been for the existence of moral evil, the creature never could have been made to feel properly its dependence upon the Creator. Had all the heavenly attributes been imparted to man, even in subordinate measure, he would have claimed equality with God, as the rebel angels did in heaven. But the existence of sin

holds the creature in due subordination to the Creator. He can punish, and he can pardon ; therefore, both fear and love are exercised towards him. Had man never fallen, the most transcendent attribute of Jehovah, his mercy, would not have been developed, and Christ would never have descended from heaven to bless the earth with his presence. The existence of sin, therefore, has brought fully to light the most glorious attributes of God, and redeemed man feels a love and adoration for him, which he could not have rendered to any thing short of a *Saviour*. It is to him we owe our escape from final misery ; therefore our love and gratitude are perpetually in exercise towards him : and the practice of these virtuous feelings ennobles and enlarges our nature. Unregenerate men cannot feel these emotions ; their thoughts and wishes centre in self, or if they diverge from that rallying point, it is only to pursue some modification of selfish enjoyment, a little farther from the soul's abiding place. But the creature could not have been brought to comprehend its own relative situation in life, had it not experienced that lapse from virtue which exposed it to the just wrath of its Creator. It could not, otherwise, have been made sensible of the darkness and dependence of its *creaturely* state, nor could it have known the dreadful consequences of falling off from God, had not a specific example of these consequences been ordained by heavenly wisdom. Thus it is clear, that many precious blessings have arisen out of the evils incident to our imperfect state. God has been reconciled to his lapsed creatures, in a manner which opens all the sluices of virtuous feeling in their hearts, and for ever establishes, on a sure foundation, the nature of their future intercourse with their reconciled parent. The convicted sinner *dares* not, and he *desires* not, to quit that being who has taught him the value of heavenly mercy, who has given him a remedy for human evil, and opened before his eyes a future state of blessedness.

To Christians, my dear Mary, the Sabbath is always welcome. Whatever may be their worldly pleasures, the day appointed for devotional rest is hailed with joy, for it gives them time to pour forth their tribute of grateful adoration, without infringing on worldly duties. The Bible is their appropriate study on that day, a book that has disseminated more truth, and wisdom, and peace, than all the writings of genius and philosophy. On this day, the rich and prosperous must feel the worth and importance of religion; but its full value is known only to the poor and unfortunate. What would the ignorant and indigent part of mankind have done with philosophy for their sole guide, a thing utterly unattainable by them? I am convinced, that people of the higher classes, who never feel the weariness of body attendant on severe labour, have not, with all their refinement, as high a zest for the holy day of rest, as the pious poor are blessed with. The impartiality of God is little understood by his creatures. Many of them think themselves particularly favoured by outward circumstances, when if they could but understand the feelings of the humblest disciple, with the scantest portion of visible good, they would find an equal or a greater measure of spiritual enjoyment.

The labouring poor require bodily as well as mental rest. This doubtless enhances their pleasurable participation of the day of holy leisure. How much human misery is prevented by this one divine ordinance. In a Christian land, the harshest and most remorseless tyrant, dares not entirely deprive his dependant or his slave of Sabbath privileges. Public opinion restrains even the vilest despot in some measure, and civil institutions require some attention to divine laws. What would be the condition of the lower classes of society, if mankind were left to their own choice in appointing a day of rest? Small indeed would be the portion of

time allotted to the exhausted frame of the slave or the hired menial, for the purpose of refreshing worn out nature.

But to the Being who made man, and ordained that he should depend chiefly upon his Creator for every mitigation of the penalties of guilt, the least conspicuous and the least attractive being in the universe, is as important, as much under his guidance, and as much entitled to his aid, as the monarch on his throne.

God is no respecter of persons, according to our modes of discrimination. The humblest and most contrite heart is nearer to his favour, than the most exalted potentate on earth.

We sometimes complain that we have difficulty in entering the presence of our heavenly Father; that is to say, we cannot *realize* his presence in prayer, by a lively exercise of faith. This difficulty proceeds from our habit of exalting, instead of depressing, our minds during actual worship. The Lord dwells in heaven, it is true; and we think it necessary to lift up our thoughts, before they can find him in his exalted dwelling place. But he also visits the lowly, self-abased heart—the meek contrite spirit. Therefore, we shall be more certain of enjoying his presence by *debasing*, than by *elevating* our thoughts in the season of prayer. It is not always *necessary* to feel the peace which passeth understanding in our devotions. Some people think that devout exercises have done no good, unless they have diffused over our souls a delightful repose of spirit. But though this is a transcendently pleasant state; yet if we remember that we are *still* weak and erring creatures, and liable to daily lapses from virtue, we must expect to feel sorrow for detected sin, and remorse for continued offences against heavenly goodness. If we always felt *peace* during our devotions, it must necessarily be sometimes a *false peace*; for as we still sin, we should still keep up the exercise of repentance within us.

Therefore, when we are sorrowful and cast down with humiliation in the season of prayer, we must suppose that the Spirit of God is with us, as much as when he condescends to diffuse peace over our souls. These visitations of the Holy Spirit are certainly not as agreeable; but for aught we know, they may be more profitable than those delicious feelings which sometimes accompany the exercise of prayer.

Be not discouraged then, dear Mary, if a cloud sometimes lowers over you in such seasons. It may be, like the summer cloud, dark indeed to the eye, but carrying the fertilizing shower in its bosom.

Ever yours.

LETTER XIX.

On Conformity of Manners to the Period of Life which we are passing.

MY DEAR MARY,

There are peculiar tastes and inclinations attendant on every stage of human existence, and I may add, peculiar follies and faults. Youth *may be* vain, thoughtless, and dissipated. Middle age, proud, obstinate, and self-willed. Old age, avaricious, peevish, and self-indulgent. It is true that these foibles sometimes belong indifferently to all periods, and are indifferently the characteristics of young and old; but generally speaking, the allotment is pretty much according to my enumeration. People are very apt to imagine, when one folly makes way for another as they advance in life, that they are getting rid of their besetting sins by the natural operation of time upon the character. They are quick-sighted enough in perceiving the departing

evil, but entirely too blind to discern the one that takes its place. Nay, sometimes they give themselves great credit for having conquered some predominant fault, when it has literally died a natural death.

Women are peculiarly prone to this species of self-delusion, perhaps because they love to take credit to themselves whenever they can. I once heard a lady congratulate herself with great complacency on having conquered a prevailing fondness for fine clothes ; when the fact was, she had grown too old to adorn her own person, and had transferred the passion to another department of self-indulgence. She laid out all her money in fine furniture, and adorned her house instead of her person, while she continued to spend just as much on the one folly as she had spent on the other. Some old ladies praise themselves wonderfully for personal economy, when all the time they lay out the same sums on their children, that they once did on themselves.

Women who live in large cities, particularly who move in what is called "par excellence" the first circle, (that is, the wealthiest,) are beset with one folly from which females in the country are happily exempt; I mean, the habit of prolonging the passion for personal decoration, far beyond the prescribed limits of youth or middle age. It is difficult to grow old with dignity, and to slide gracefully over the barriers erected by custom between the different periods of life.

Some females exhaust their ingenuity in retaining, or appearing to retain, the fugitive graces of youth long after nature has dismissed them from their post. Their roses continue to bloom over the mellow tints of autumn, and even amid the frosts of wintry age. They still remain votaries of fashion, and worship at its shrine with an assiduity worthy of a more rational service. This is a melancholy view of human nature, but nevertheless we are sometimes compelled to witness it.

I was one day walking the streets of a city, when I perceived just before me an exceedingly juvenile figure enveloped in a cloud of rose-coloured drapery, with towering plumes in her wide spread bonnet. I followed her elastic movements some distance down the street, when she suddenly turned and disclosed to me, not the bloom and dimples of fifteen as I had anticipated, but a face that I well know had reckoned more than fifty winters. A quantity of artificial curls and rich lace softened the effect of age considerably in her face, but there were distinct traces of the heavy footsteps of time, in what had once been dimples, notwithstanding the almost natural roses that slept in those little dells within her cheeks. But she had that cold, rigid look that late hours, and mispent days, invariably give the faded, jaded votary of fashion. Her eyes were dim and sunken, yet there were signs which plainly indicated that their fires could be still recalled to give interest to her countenance, when she wished to put forth the relics of her charms. A near-sighted glass hung dangling to a chain around her neck. Had I seen this lady suitably dressed, in grave colours, without flounces and feathers, with a matronly cap surmounted honestly by a pair of spectacles, I should have felt much more respect for her character, than I did under the appearances I have described. Her dress was an index to her mind, and I certainly perused nothing in that table of contents, which made me wish to unclothe the volume, and penetrate deeper into her intellectual resources.

Time inevitably bears away personal graces; but it gives to the mind what it takes from the body, if proper use is made of the opportunities possessed by rational beings. Female beauty is indeed evanescent; but it is truly melancholy to observe the ingenuity that is wasted on endeavours to prolong its natural term of existence. If half that inge-

nity were used in another way, namely, in furnishing the mind with appropriate graces, those of the body would pass away without regret, for their place would be supplied by far better things. Nothing gives a more unfavourable opinion of a lady's understanding, than an insight into those little futile expedients so commonly used to veil the ravages made by time on the human lineaments. A truly sensible, and above all, a pious woman, never shrinks from disclosing to the world every token of her progress towards the final consummation of all things. She never, for an instant, suffers her mind to soar above that earth in whose bosom she will one day repose; except when her thoughts go before her into that heaven, which is to be the home of her soul. A truly wise person always retains a perception of the relative value of the two portions of his being. He ever keeps in mind that the one is to perish inevitably, and the other to exist for ever. Therefore, all his rational powers are exerted to prepare his soul for its immortal doom, while his body is just kept as comfortable as circumstances will allow during its little span of existence. But the generality of mankind reverse this rule, and foster the frame of dust, as if its value was greater than that of the never-dying spirit. They pamper it with luxury, and adorn its exterior, without at all remembering its final destination.

I would advise you, my dear Mary, to keep in view, always, the perishing nature of your mortal body, and not to waste upon it more than is absolutely essential to decency and comfort, either in food or clothing. But you must, of course, make allowances for the different situations in life, and consider the exact degree of personal economy that can be practised, without incurring the charge of strangeness and oddity. An example, to be really useful, must not be *exaggerated*, or unreasonable in its requisitions upon public opinion. Too much innovation on established practices will excite ridicule, and open the way for the charge of

enthusiasm, a thing much deprecated by narrow-minded people who do not understand the term, and are not aware that a well directed zeal opens many paths to usefulness, which common plodders in the beaten track of custom would never have discovered.

But there is an enthusiasm that is really dangerous to the interests of the cause it advocates. When a weak head is acted upon by strong passions, and a vivid imagination, it sometimes devises expedients utterly impracticable as general rules, and perhaps so strange in their nature, as to excite the ridicule of ordinary minds. And the enemies of religion are never better pleased, than when they can affix the charge of imprudent and enthusiastical zeal to the active followers of Christ. It is their invariable rule to transfer the faults of professors to the principle they profess, and thus religion bears the stigma of every error committed by those who advocate its doctrines. This should make Christians particularly careful to govern their practice by reason, and to refrain from what is obnoxious to the world, in every point where such reservations are conscientiously practicable.

I once knew a very pious lady, whose abhorrence of all waste and luxury in apparel was so great, that she would not let her infants wear any sort of a border to their caps. Her husband was wealthy, and he purchased for her a carriage, which, on its arrival, proved far too handsome and costly for her use. One of her friends offered to change with her, and she actually consented to give her handsome new equipage for an old, rusty carriage, that had been many years in use.

These two examples, though they came from one who was beloved and respected for her true piety, yet made rather an unfavourable impression on society. Religion is the scape-goat with worldly people, who cast on its devoted head, all the offences committed by mistaken zeal, or luke-

warm faith, or hypocritical profession. They affect to think that Christians profess to become perfect, as soon as they enlist under the banner of Christ, and therefore they take upon themselves to prove that this is a mistake. In proving this, they drag in all the evil deeds of nominal professors, and of sincere, but young and weak Christians. Now it is a little hard, that the world will not understand our fundamental doctrine; namely, that man is a *sinner*, and that religion must operate a long time on his character before he can attain any sort of moral worth. But enough of what every body knows full well already. I advise you, my dear girl, to glide gently through your appointed term of life, resigning successively, such pursuits as are unsuited to declining years.

Bear ever in mind, that death is inevitable. Reflect on this subject habitually, and you will soon cease to be overawed by it. Death ought not to be an appalling subject to the Christian. If *it is so* with you, be assured that something is wrong in your mind. Seek out this something, and pray over it, until you can endure to think of your latter end without alarm.

I am truly yours.

LETTER XX.

On the Distribution of Time.

MY DEAR MARY,

There is nothing more important to a female, than the habit of distributing her time among her many avocations, so as to give to each one its allotted share, and no more. The period assigned to education is so short, with your sex,

and custom sanctions their *attempting* so many acquisitions, that I fear, with all possible industry and method, they must fail in some of their undertakings. Again, when women marry, their occupations are so various, their duties so comprehensive, (at least in our southern country,) that it is difficult for the most active and diligent to perform them all satisfactorily. I have felt deep compassion for young women, when they have found themselves suddenly, and as if unexpectedly thronged with occupations, so various and so uncongenial with taste and habit, that their strength has failed under the burden.

This happens not unfrequently among us in the present day, in consequence of our very erroneous methods of female education. Our young women are put to school for a few years, during which they acquire a mere smattering of various fashionable accomplishments, without consulting nature or taste. They come home with a taste for dress, and sometimes for dissipation; a thorough repugnance to homely occupation, and a great relish for sentimental reading and conversation. By and by they marry, and for a short period, the romance of their situation maintains the freshness of feeling and a zest for life; but presently an *avalanche* of care comes in the form of household and maternal duties. The poor victim struggles with her adverse destiny for a time, and gleans from the multitude of her employments such as are best suited to her taste, while she gives her energies honestly to the discharge of her duties. But every thing in this department is new to her. She mismanages her children and servants from sheer ignorance. Her temper is soured, and her health affected, so that a few brief years of this sort of martyrdom often transforms the blooming, joyous girl, sportive as the summer bird, into a melancholy, moping, sad-visaged matron, with whom life is dull, flat, and unprofitable, even in its spring tide.

This is a melancholy, but a faithful picture. Let us turn

from it to contemplate what *may be*, when mothers recover from the epidemic mania of having accomplished daughters. At present, they educate their children as they build their houses, after some plan of beauty, without reference to utility. They forget that the houses are to live in, and the children to be made subservient in some way to the rational purposes of existence. All future views are lost in the present gratification of having something to admire themselves, and to attract admiration from others.

People forget that their children are not playthings, but accountable beings. When they remember this important fact, and act accordingly, all things will be rectified.

Those who have many things to do, may by diligent practice acquire the habit of gliding from one occupation to another, without stopping between them. Some heads of families are always deficient in some part of their routine of duty, and this evidently arises from want of method in arranging their different employments.

We should always bear in mind the value of time, as a talent intrusted to us by supreme Wisdom, for the purpose of promoting his glory. There is a portion of every life laid waste by unavoidable causes: Sickness, that inevitable impediment to pleasure and profit; weariness of spirit from disappointed hope, or that deep sorrow of heart which paralyzes every feeling. In short, each individual has some peculiar disqualifying circumstance to contend with, in making the most of his little span of human existence.

One of the greatest of these evils, is a certain nameless state of mind and body, a sort of contest between the flesh and the spirit, which seems to monopolize both, to the exclusion of all customary sensations. It would be terrible indeed were this habit to extend itself over the rational faculties, so as to chain them in its spell. But fortunately this state of feeling is so unpleasant, that every one knows

how to struggle against the incubus, with every power which can be arrayed against it.

I was much pleased in conversing with the daughter of my friend Emilia, to find that she had laboured successfully in forming a methodical arrangement of her time. I observed a book in her work-basket one day, when she was sitting near me, and on asking what she was studying, she told me that it was her custom to have some useful author always at hand to fill up the spare fragments of her time.

"I always find," said she, "some little interval between the changes from one occupation to another: this is what is generally called 'loitering time,' and I do not see why such 'fragments may not be gathered up, so that nothing may be lost.'

"I generally keep in my basket some serious book, from each sentence of which may be gleaned some salutary instruction. A moment suffices to take a text for one's thoughts while walking to and fro, or sitting still at needle-work. Nothing tends to improve the mind more than watchfulness over the thoughts, to keep them from running after unprofitable subjects. Few persons reflect seriously on the habitual occupation of their thoughts. If they were to scan their own reflections closely, they would often be startled at the dreadful misrule which prevails in the intellectual realm. There is great benefit, too, in systematic reflection on the subject of death. I used once to be a coward under bodily pain, but I soon learned that sickness, rightly considered, was a season of improvement; and this comforted me under some otherwise very afflicting dispensations. I now struggle against bodily pain as long as I can; but when it casts me down, I endeavour to profit by the humiliation. I think of the time when the frame will be dissolved into the elements that it is composed of, and the imperishable spirit, released from its moorings, will

enter the realms of bliss. I consider every season of bodily prostration as a message or warning to the soul, to loosen its hold on the things of time, that its grasp may not be too rudely shaken off in the last conflict. Such reflections are at first awful ; but after a while they become sweetly soothing. The spirit holds closer communion with its God, when the walls of its clay tabernacle are shaking under the earthquake which is destined finally to overthrow it. Then the Lord appears as he did when he put forth his hand to Peter, to still the shrinking tremors of his spirit." These observations were doubly interesting to me, you may suppose, when I contemplated the blooming youth of the person who made them. Scarce treading the threshold of busy life, her fresh and unwearied spirit had soared away on the wings of faith, to anticipate the glories of eternity.

I learnt from Emma, that she was indebted to Miss Hannah More's works for some of her most lucid views of divine truth. "That venerable mother in Israel," said she, has disseminated scriptural truth widely and clearly through the world. Her 'Practical Piety,' and 'Christian Morals,' have done incalculable good to the cause of religion. Her chapter on Small Faults and Virtues searches the human heart to its inmost depths. I glean from this magazine of pious maxims many valuable thoughts to fill up my meditative hours.

"Miss More's style is objected to by many persons, but to me it has peculiar utility, as it does not abstract my attention from the pure and salutary lessons of wisdom, of which it is the vehicle. Her chapter on 'Self-examination' opens every avenue of the mind to full and free investigation. I read it generally once a month, and treasure up its maxims as rules for practice."

This eulogium upon my friend and guide, Miss More, gave me great pleasure. Some people complain that all abstract morality is dry, and hers peculiarly so, from the

measured monotony of the style. But her expositions of scripture morals are so pure and clear, and at the same time so comprehensive, that they apply to every possible exigency of human life. I cannot offer you a better guide, my dear Mary, in your researches after divine truth and practical wisdom, than the writings of this truly evangelical woman. Procure a copy of them, (there is one just published, both full and cheap,) make it the associate of your Bible, and read a portion of her wisdom along with the sacred volume.

Young Christians must beware of turning aside from religious books, even to works of science, and interesting history or biography. The graces of the christian character must be sedulously cultivated, or they will languish, for human nature is not their favourite soil. As well might you expect your garden to yield abundant fruits and vegetables with no more culture than simply scattering the seed, as to look for the lively product of faith from a heart choked up with the trash and rubbish of the world. Read the biography of pious women with attention; procure the Memoirs of Mrs. Graham, Lady Glenarchy, Mrs. Huntington, Mrs. Ramsay, Mrs. Judson, Miss Smelt; and also the biography of pious men, such as Newton, Scott, Legh Richmond, Urquhart, Buchanan, Henry Martyn, and Henry Kirk White. Let these books be the constant themes of your thoughts. To these add Mason on Self-Knowledge, Baxter's Saint's Rest, Doddridge's Rise and Progress, Dwight's Theology, Wilberforce's Practical View of Christianity, Davies' Sermons, Irving and Chalmers, with some others, and you will have a rich mine of intellectual and spiritual wealth, of far more value than the wealth of Golconda or Peru.

Adieu for the present.

LETTER XXI.

Manners the Result of Intellectual Cultivation.

MY DEAR MARY,

In all the old fashioned works intended exclusively for female improvement, you will find specific rules for female manners and behaviour, drawn up with methodical gravity. But this department of our education is now left to result from the general effect of mental improvement. Women are not told how they must look, and sit, and walk; but they are first supplied with ideas, and then expected to find out their own modes and fashions of behaviour. To give a girl explicit rules for exterior deportment would be to make her a thing of artifice—a very automaton. This is an age of better taste, and accordingly the manners of women are left to establish themselves, not after any formal model, but as individual taste may direct. Yet in a work professedly intended to give rules of feminine propriety, it may not be proper wholly to omit directions for the exterior deportment of the sex.

All affectation is in bad taste, and if it interests and pleases at all, it must be among persons of singularly bad *gout* in female manners. Generally speaking, the effect of such things does not repay one for the trouble of being laboriously artificial. All *acting* is tiresome, and then there is always a risk of sliding imperceptibly into natural manners, or falling abruptly into old familiar movements, which produce a very incongruous effect. Better be always natural than incur the risk of being unmasked before the world. Sprightly girls should carefully guard against levity, and grave ones against an excess of reserve. The first is the worst and the most common extreme; but it is wrong to let cheerfulness degenerate into boisterous mirth. Those who are

extravagantly gay at one time, are generally proportionably dull at another. Nothing is more desirable than equable spirits. Do not suppose that the spirits are to be left to their natural tendency. They require some discipline to bring them within the bounds of reason and christian propriety. A very gay temper requires to be chastened into becoming sobriety. A solemn mood, on the other hand, must be encouraged to relax into moderate cheerfulness.

Youthful gaiety of heart is very fascinating before it loses its vernal freshness; but enough usually befalls the sex between the cradle and the hymeneal altar, to still the wild tumult of animal excitement. And this is not amiss, though we are tempted into sentimental distress on the subject, when we consider it superficially. Juvenile gaiety is something like the laughter which Solomon compares to the crackling of thorns under a pot. There is more imaginary than real attraction in it. The world does not furnish legitimate fuel for the blaze of youthful spirits. The sooner therefore it subsides into rational cheerfulness, the better for all parties. That sort of gaiety is rarely intellectual, and we should never encourage a frame of mind that stifles the operations of the intellectual powers.

The intercourse between young persons of both sexes is now established on its proper footing. It is as free and easy as is consistent with delicacy and propriety. There is an opportunity afforded for that reciprocation of thoughts and feelings, which constitutes the charm of social life. The two portions of the human species learn to respect and appreciate each other. Men learn, that if women are not equal to them in science and knowledge, they at least possess intellectuality enough to qualify them for intimate friends, and agreeable associates.

The two sexes assimilate in taste and sentiments; they become imperceptibly prepared for living happily together in the most intimate of all unions; and each party finds

charms in the other which they want in themselves. A well educated girl makes a charming companion for an amiable well principled youth just released from the tedium and monotony of scholastic duties. His mental powers are refreshed by the vernal flow of unsophisticated feelings. His tastes are cultivated by a contact with the pure polish of feminine manners. She learns from him many useful facts, and imparts to him in return many pure and verdant thoughts, just from the fresh coinage of nature's mint. All this is delightful. *Love* arising from such an intercourse is as pure as human nature can prompt.

The destiny of a whole life sometimes takes its hues from a few moments of such intercourse as I have described. An attachment so formed is replete with pure sentiment and disinterested esteem ; it grows out of the soundest and freshest portion of the human character. The heart has not had time to contract itself ; the world is new and carries home no sickening consciousness of disappointment and delusion to the bosom. Hope raises her standard amidst a throng of juvenile projects for warding off the penalties of humanity. Disappointment *will* come, to be sure, but not before the soul has tasted some of the good things of this imperfect state. The heart grows old in experience from witnessing the troubles of others, and narrows its sphere of expectations before the blessings of life begin to fail. And it does this without becoming sour and morose. There is still a little hoard of untainted feeling in its secret shrine, where the frost-blight of selfishness has never penetrated. Then when religion adds its blessed influence to the lessons of wisdom and experience, the heart wonders that it should ever have anticipated vacuity, or dreaded monotony.

I heed not the hackneyed opinion, that youth is exclusively the happiest season of life. It is not always so. With many individuals it is far too busy with tumultuous feelings, and too boisterous with unrestrained passions, to admit of

happiness. It is too poignant in hope, and eager in expectation, for any earthly joy to yield real gratification. Then the want of self-command, and experience in the ways of life are constantly inducing errors, from which the heart shrinks, without being able to avoid them. Happiness is a tranquil sentiment, and youth is rarely tranquil. Besides, at that season, the heart has not become inured to the treatment of a selfish world. All the freshest feelings of unblighted affection, and the buoyant soarings of ardent hope, are sent forth confidently into that icy region from which they return cowed and chastened to the chilled and wounded bosom. By and by, experience teaches that little is to be gained in a liberal intercourse of thought and feeling with people who have learnt to *take* all they can get, and to return nothing in exchange for disinterested affection. A cloud gathers over the gay prospects of youth, and the heart learns to dispense its treasures less prodigally for the future.

Religion is exactly adapted to the exigencies of the soul at this crisis. Those affections which have been rejected by a selfish world, are offered at a worthier shrine, and received, with all their imperfections, by omnipotent mercy.

How indescribably soothing are the first breathings of the spirit of divine love upon the chastened spirit of man! Rejected by our fellow worms, we find ourselves accepted by a pure and sinless God. The dove of peace descends, and broods over the troubled waters of human passion, calling from the deep recesses of the bosom, the chilled and blighted affections, to offer them at the holy shrine of almighty love.

May you, my dear girl, experience all these blessed emotions, without having to endure a previous conflict with worldly disappointments. When religion is entwined with the first feelings of youth by early and skilful culture, the heart is spared the chastening of worldly disappointment. Its first yearnings are after higher things; and, thanks to

infinite mercy, those things of matchless worth are attainable to all who seek them rightly.

Religion, my dear Mary, is (among its other inestimable advantages) an admirable polisher of the *manners*. I know nothing so sure to give a charm to female deportment, as the possession of vital piety. It sheds a halo round the mind, and imparts a lustre to every moral quality. A heart elevated habitually with the exalted emotion of love to God, must send forth upon the world a perennial stream of sweet and holy feelings. It is the glorious province of Christianity to extinguish the malignant passions, and soften all the asperities of man. Unless it performs these miracles, it is not that religion which Christ came to propagate. The tree *must* be known by its fruits. A *new* heart cannot prompt us to walk in the old ways of evil familiar to its degenerate state. A *right* spirit cannot take the same beaten track of error from which it was the province of Christianity to reclaim it.

No, my dear Mary. People of the world may indeed be allowed to doubt the efficacy of the regenerating principle, when they detect carnal motives and espy worldly passions rioting with primitive luxuriance beneath the flimsy mask of a nominal faith. Alas, for poor human nature, when the shadow is so often made to pass for the substance of virtue! "We are believing Christians," say many in this world, whose natural current of thought and feeling has sustained no momentary interruption from the admission of a faith which is intended to effect a radical change in every disposition of the soul. What wonder, then, that the declaration should be so common, "We see no difference between these Christians and other people. They are selfish, or avaricious, or passionate, or malicious, or envious, like other varieties of human character."

When real Christians reflect upon these melancholy

truths, they should rouse every energy of their individual faith, for the purpose of making the change from death unto life visible in themselves. Their prayer should be, "Let *me*, at least, O Lord, show forth in my conduct the efficacy of thy holy religion, as a soul healing principle. Let *me* become a new creature, for I profess to have been born anew of thy Spirit, and I long to show its fruits to the world in a living faith. Try *me*—prove the ground of my heart. I know there are ways of wickedness in me, and I long to experience a full regeneration of soul. Sin is hateful to me. O aid me to cast it from me. Shall I appear before the world under the sacred designation of a *Christian*, and shall that world behold in me the same carnal being, sullied by the same vices, tainted by the same errors, which identified my unregenerate state? Forbid it love! forbid it reason! Let me not so dishonour thy cause, Oh my God. But without the incessant operation of thy grace, the original taint of sin will pollute every impulse. Oh, cleanse me daily. Heal me hourly. I *believe* that thou canst effect this mighty work. Oh, make me a living example of the truth of my own established belief, that the Christian is *born again*, and must become a new creature."

Such should be the constant aim, and the earnest prayer of those on whom devolves the holy task of *proving* the truth of God's word, by their daily conduct. Is not this a mighty responsibility? Should it not mingle with every thought, and prompt every word of the Christian indeed? Alas! when we hear people of the world sneer at our faith, instead of getting angry with them, we ought seriously to ask ourselves, what we have *done* to prove the truth of our religion. In following this rule, we might chance to find that instead of *doing* any thing in aid of the holy cause, we have perhaps polluted the multitude in the evil practice of disproving the truth daily, by our conduct. The most sacred and

awful responsibility is imposed on us, and yet we act as if we were as free in thinking and doing, as those who are restrained by no profession.

Some of those who profess to feel this responsibility, confine their efforts in maintaining the cause of God, solely to their own particular sect. They are warm in defence of particular doctrines; but their zeal cools when they discuss the general merits of the cause. They inveigh against particular sects, as intolerant or careless, or worldly minded, or as sanctioning some individual practice or opinion obnoxious to other sects.

I know people who are cold enough when speaking of the mighty results of Christian principle in meliorating the moral condition of man; but let them speak of their own sectarian tenets, and a warm current of feeling seems to gush forth as if from some hidden reservoir. They wax warmer and warmer, as the merits of their own opinions and doctrines become brighter and brighter to their contemplation. With this warm stream of sectarian feeling, mingles a bitter current of animosity towards those of different modes of thinking. They declaim, and redden, and sometimes vituperate their sectarian opponents. Their minds fasten upon some perverted statement of the doctrines of other denominations of Christians, and they are so absorbed in wonder at *their* errors, that it never occurs to them to investigate their own. Indeed they would flush indignantly at the mention of error, as applied to their own doctrines.

Bitterly, indeed, must all true disciples of the Redeemer lament the prevalence of sectarian prejudice among the Christians of our land.

The Author of Christianity has permitted, for wise purposes, that the Church on earth should be divided and subdivided into different denominations, all of which concur in the same broad and bright foundation of scriptural truth. To give scope to diversity of tastes and opinions, he has

left the arrangement of subordinate parts of the mighty system, to his creatures on earth, moulding them all with omnipotent skill into the one stupendous plan devised by his wisdom. But the perverted ingenuity of man has raised insurmountable barriers between the servants of the same Master, and children of the same Parent. Instead of considering themselves as so many links of the same chain, they rend the bonds of Christian union, and deepen every shade of difference, until they produce total dissimilarity among brethren of the same great family. We are permitted to nourish a rational preference for our own modes of faith, as we are allowed to love those best who most resemble us in character; but surely this privilege does not necessarily infer, not only an exclusive partiality for our own sect and family, but an envenomed prejudice against the rest of our fellow creatures.

Sectarian prejudice narrows the mind, and sours the temper, while it contracts the kindred charities of life to a single point. Every Christian should enlist with some fraternity of evangelical worshippers; for the rights and privileges of church membership form a valuable portion of our social prerogatives. They are but another modification of the sacred family compact; and the more ties we can frame to strengthen our kindred charities, the wider becomes the sphere of social affection.

All our virtuous feelings require careful nurture, and the enlargement of our sweetest affections produces an increase of virtuous enjoyment. On the contrary, whatever narrows our sphere of sympathies and affections, tends to render the heart less susceptible of happiness. I know instances of sectarian prejudice that have effectually destroyed family harmony among otherwise amiable people. I know cases where a blight has fallen upon fair prospects, from no visible source, but those differences of opinion in matters of faith, which are perfectly compatible with the strictest harmony.

Guard carefully against these errors, my dear girl. Distrust your own Christian feelings, if they do not peremptorily resist the entrance of harsh thoughts into your bosom, against your brethren of any other denomination. Distrust the spiritual head of your church, if you find him pleased at hearing animadversions against any other sect. It should be enough for him that you indulge a rational preference for your own. None but narrow hearts and weak heads find invectives against other modes of faith the surest way of maintaining a regard for their own. These are pitiful expedients to enhance the merits of the cause you have adhered to from motives of rational preference. But many persons maintain religious excitement by ministering to it through the medium of carnal feelings. They kindle the flame of affection from the torch of discord, and find their love for their own sect increase in proportion to their dislike for every other.

But enough of this ungrateful topic. I will only add, that I wish you to unite yourself with the sect *you like best yourself*, after a strict and impartial examination into the respective merits of them all. Take no one's opinion on trust in such an important question. When you have decided, prudently shun all discussion on the subject with others. Cherish a warm affection for true Christians of all other denominations, and do not fancy that the want of spirituality in a few individuals affords a sufficient pretext for condemning the sect to which they belong. There is enough correct Christian principle in all denominations to maintain their partizans in a virtuous tone of feeling, if they make a right use of it; and there are errors enough existing also in each sect to authorize many lapses of Christian duty in those who wish to avail themselves of such circumstances.

The strongest parties have their weak points, and the weakest have some strong ones. I consider that sect the

wisest and the most likely to prosper, which adheres conscientiously to its own principles, and exercises most liberality towards the principles of other sects.

I am, dear Mary, yours most fondly.

LETTER XXII.

On Friendship.

MY DEAR MARY,

I have endeavoured to direct you in the acquisition of that friend who sticketh closer than a brother, and I will now give you my ideas upon the subject of those ties which you will form with your fellow pilgrims on the journey of life.

Friendship, in its purity, is indeed a rich treasure, and a delightful solace to the cares and troubles incident to humanity; but it is not so easy a thing as is generally imagined, to form and maintain this union consistently and effectually. It has been my aim in these letters, to discuss candidly the defects attributed to your sex. Inconstancy, both in friendship and in love, is one among the number. But again I must affirm, that this vice is the growth of *weak minds*, of whichever sex they may chance to be. The reason why female friendships are so often unstable, is obviously because they are carelessly formed. Indeed, I will not allow the term friendship to be applied to the sentimental connexions contracted in the nonage of reason, and under the pupilage of an ill-ruled, exuberant imagination. Neither do I dignify with that consecrated term, the acquaintanceships and companionships contracted under boarding-school auspices. Friendship, in its true acceptation, signifies a union of hearts

which endures through time, and if my hopes do not deceive me, through eternity also. It is not a provisional, conventional agreement, destined to fulfil a stipulated good, and to be dissolved. It is not an interested connexion, which may be broken when it has yielded certain good offices. Neither is it a chance-medley assortment, in which hearts are brought into contact for a brief space, and then separated for ever. It is a union of souls, sanctioned by divine authority, and intended for the reciprocal benefit of the parties united. It cultivates all the social virtues, and fosters the rational sensibilities of man. No selfish, weak person can be a good friend: no versatile, capricious mind can maintain this connexion. It requires disinterestedness, firmness, and tenderness, to form an indestructible union of souls, such as deserves to be recognized by the Father of all in heaven. In my own opinion, there is a sanctity in the term friend, which prevents me from bestowing it without deep consideration. There is nothing so much talked about, and so little understood, in this world, as friendship. The connexions which bear that name among us, with few exceptions, are slightly formed ties of interest, or taste, or convenience, or chance, brought together with a breath, and dissolved in the pronouncing of a sentence. They are no more to be compared to the real bond, than the unspun flax to the twisted cable. But enough of similitudes.

It is my wish that you should perfectly understand what friendship *is*, that you may be able to form and maintain for yourself, this inestimable support and solace under the trials of life. Choose then a firm-minded, amiable-tempered, warm-hearted woman. Study her character until you understand it thoroughly. If you discover traits that you think are incompatible with the preservation of friendship, recede in time from a strict union, and content yourself with holding her in a subordinate grade of regard; but if your affection is firm enough to stand a few uncongenial traits, you must

resolve to bear the burden faithfully, when once you have assumed it. Should your friend prove selfish or capricious, you must prepare to endure many trials of feeling as well as patience. It is hard indeed, to put up with the frequent mortification of finding yourself deserted in the hour of need; of being laid aside from mere weariness of a tedious connexion; or perhaps rebuked for asking too much, when you have in your turn sacrificed every thing.

A warm, affectionate heart delights in being called upon to serve a friend to its own hinderance; it makes all requisite sacrifices with pleasure; and, judging others by itself, has no hesitation in believing that these services will be strictly reciprocal. By and by it is so situated as to require a return of favours. The case may be urgent, and, in full confidence of success, the application is made. Would I could save you all similar sufferings, dear Mary, by detailing at length my own feelings at such a crisis, when the friend in whom I trusted, coldly declined my request, and wondered I could be so unreasonable as to make it. But instead of representing my own sufferings, I had better point out the manner in which reason and religion succeeded in mitigating them.

After my first mortification¹ was over, I re-examined the character of my friend, and found that enthusiasm had led me to expect more than that character was capable of performing. I had been unreasonable in my requisitions, not upon friendship itself, but upon the person whom I had invested with all the rights and privileges of that exalted sentiment. The fault was partly in myself, and I bore it better than if it had been all my friend's. I did not throw away in disgust the portion of regard which was really felt for me, but I determined never again to tax it too highly. It was then that I clearly understood what true disinterestedness meant; for I learnt in some sort to practise it. I continued to serve my friend whenever occasion offered,

without expecting any thing like strict reciprocity of services. The great ethic rule of three—"Do unto all men as you would they should do unto you"—is not always correctly understood. When people do as they would be done by, they often assume to themselves the right of exacting more than all persons can perform. They forget that their own part of the duty should be performed with a single eye to the glory of God, and are apt to complain, that they do not receive exactly the same measure they mete to others. But if we consider first our capacities to do good, and next the motive by which we should be actuated in doing it, viz. the glory of our God,—we will thankfully receive whatever portion may fall to our lot in return, though it may fall short of what we have done unto others. God, in commanding us to do unto all men what we would wish them to do to us, has given us a rule by which he exacts as much as we can do for his own glory. We do it in fact unto God, and not unto others—"Whatsoever ye do unto the least of these, is done unto me"—and we should consider in the very act itself, that we are doing it for one who has a right to our best services. If therefore all men perform this duty as they ought, mankind will reap the benefit of their own obedience to God. The good that he has commanded to be done for his glory, is done to our fellow men. What infinite, what wonderful wisdom in the Highest and Mightiest ! But let not man suppose when he is doing his best to his fellow men, that he is to receive their best in return. No: he must consult his own wishes as the measure of *his* obedience, not of the obedience of others, because that would keep his eye on the *reward* of his services, whereas it should be kept on the glory of God, which is to be promoted by those services. I once heard a poor, discontented woman say, that she had all her life been doing as she would be done by, but that nobody had ever done by her as she wished. "Then," said I, "you have done good by others, solely that they

might return the good to you, have you not?" "Yes, surely," said she, "an't that to be the reward of our good deeds?" "No, no, my friend," said I, "you mistake the matter. You must keep the law of God for his glory, not for your own interest." She said whiningly, that this was a new thing to her, and she was too old to learn.

But to return to our original subject. I would wish you, dear Mary, to consider yourself solemnly bound to perform all the offices of affection to those whom you have openly invested with the claims of friendship. Measure not your own deeds by theirs, but strictly enforce the golden rule upon yourself, however it may be slighted by others. Yet if the person you have chosen as your friend, should slight you entirely, or show a desire to be released from the tie, do not attempt to withhold her. On the contrary, give full scope to her wishes; but remember, that you are to bear no ill will, nor harbour a resentful thought against her. If she has indeed acted amiss, her conduct will be its own punishment, and surely, if ever she deserves chastisement it will come upon her, for wilfully casting away the treasure of a warm, disinterested heart. The time will come, (unless she is entirely worthless,) when she will feel it, and if you can ever render her a good office, I am sure you will do it with alacrity. A good heart can never entirely subdue a deep and ardent attachment. Much tenderness and compassion will remain at the bottom of the heart, ready to come forth at the first call.

If you should have the blessing of deserving friends, I need not instruct you how to cherish them: your own heart will perform that office spontaneously. Yet I would warn you against expecting too much, and above all, against torturing your friends with needless jealousies and suspicions. Some people cannot bear that their intimate friends should give any share of their affections to others. This is selfish and unreasonable. Surely if you have proper confidence

in your friend, (and that you *must* have in a tried one,) you may safely leave to herself the privilege of forming other friendships. Pay her the compliment of loving those whom she loves, and enlarge your circle for her sake. But never suffer morbid sensibility to disturb your peace, and that of your chosen friends. I have often observed, that suspecting ill will in others, very often produces it ; and on the contrary, I have also discovered, that you may do away trifling displeasure, by wilfully overlooking it, and acting as if it did not exist. With regard to confidential disclosures, I think great mischief is done by incautious young girls, who love mystery because it invests them with a feeling of self-importance ; they will have their secrets, therefore, and make a great show of confiding them to a *chosen few*. But all this parade is beneath my notice, as it is beneath your practice.

Did you never observe a certain affected young lady, who is brimful of mawkish sentiment ? How fond of mystery she is—what a budget of confidence she has to unlade to her *chere amie* ! I should really shrink from her friendship as a severe infliction. But seriously speaking, discreet, correct, and well educated women, should have very few secrets. Indeed, I know not what strictly legitimate mysteries they have a right to. Accident, to be sure, may make them acquainted with things that should not be disclosed to every one ; but in the fair and free social intercourse of life, mysteries are unpleasant, if not suspicious. In all love affairs, young ladies should consider it a point of honour, to be silent respecting those lovers whom they do not mean to accept. None but their parents and confidential friends should be informed of these things. But when a young lady has made a selection, and is actually betrothed, I see no occasion for concealment. In the first place, let her desire it ever so much, it is unattainable. The more she involves her affairs in mystery, the more she excites

curiosity; and that busy quality once set to work, there is no doubt but it will discover either truth or falsehood. Is it not therefore more natural, that a delicate, candid female should let the truth be known, than that she should subject herself to malicious or envious misconstruction, by insisting upon mystery? I once knew a young lady, who would not suffer her own near relations to be told of her engagement. There was not even to be a whisper on the subject within her knowledge. The consequence was, that every one set to work at guessing, and the whole affair was discovered, and a great deal more discussed than it would have been, if it had been honestly acknowledged. The young lady went to a party with her lover, but would not allow him to approach her, for fear people should *guess something*: the whole room knew the fact, and watched every movement of the mysterious couple. The next day, nothing was talked of but their sly glances, and tender signals to each other during the evening. Had they not attempted mystery, the circumstance, being of frequent occurrence, would have passed without a remark.

When a secret is told you, it should be kept inviolably; however unnecessary the mystery may appear to you, it is your sacred duty to be secret. You cannot reveal such a confidence without dishonour. But I pray you, my dear, have few mysteries of your own. Let your conduct be so open, that secrecy will not be needful. Many people have no other use for a friend, than to keep their secrets; and that is one reason why true friendship is so rare. You will know how to use your friends to more purpose. They will aid you in all your difficulties with advice—with upholding; and lastly and most dearly, with sympathy in your inevitable sorrows. May you be blest with a true friend, who will adhere to you inflexibly through good report and evil report; through prosperity and adversity; through all the

changes of this mutable world, and even smooth the bed of death in the closing struggle of nature. I can wish you few better things on this side heaven. With true regard, I remain

Ever yours.

LETTER XXIII.

On Romance and Poetry.

MY DEAR MARY,

It is customary in the present age, to condemn, *en masse*, the whole race of romances as dangerous productions. But I cannot consent to sweep away so large a portion of the blossoms of literature, and so fair a field for the exercise and improvement of taste. Dry writers, who contend for the daily bread of sober, nutritious morality, are afraid to allow any mixture of fancy's flowers, with the intellectual banquet of philosophy and science. But though I would certainly prefer solid works to the light productions of fancy, yet I cannot but desire to retain the latter as auxiliaries in my plan of mental improvement.

To ground an education upon romance reading, would be like building a portico instead of a dwelling house. But no one will deny that the portico is a pleasing, and even useful, appendage to the comfortable mansion, when it is erected on a firm foundation. Besides, if all moralists *were* to unite in prohibiting works of fancy, it would be impossible to enforce the prohibition. If they are not read openly, they will be devoured in secret; and the habit of practising deception is more dangerous to the morals, than a host of romances. I never knew an instance of an imperative prohibition of this sort, that was not accompanied with

evasions, if not positive infractions. Parents should avoid enforcing such rules as may admit the imputation of needless severity or fastidious particularity. However dutiful their children may be, they will find human nature harder to control than they imagined, when they were forming their theories upon some beautiful abstract system. It is better, therefore, to make timely allowance for those exuberances, which will infallibly present difficulties in practice, though they may have been overlooked in theory. But even supposing it practicable to keep young people from romances of every description, it certainly is not desirable in my opinion. There are works of moral fiction in our day, which are eminently calculated to exalt the moral sense, and develop the social virtues. The mode of illustrating by fictitious examples the most needful moral qualities, has been practised successfully in all ages. The sacred parables themselves are beautiful specimens of this method of instruction : most of the books intended for children are on this plan. But when the intellect has expanded, and can comprehend the abstract principles of ethics, it is alleged that the mind can receive more solid improvement from works of reason and philosophy. This is very true. There are individuals of both sexes who are capable of comprehending the deepest and most abstract disquisitions on morals ; and such works should indubitably be read by those gifted individuals. But there are many females, (I will confine myself to them,) who have not sufficiently strong minds to enter into deep investigations. To all such a lighter method of instruction is valuable, because it enables them to draw important truths from accessible sources. And to many, whose opportunities of acquiring solid information are rare, those works which simplify important knowledge, are valuable. But for you, my dear Mary, who have every advantage in acquiring an education, I would lay down a plain and easy rule.

Never suffer yourself to be seduced into novel reading as an *occupation*. In your hours of recreation, read those works of fiction which have been put forth by writers of undoubted talent. To suppose that you can prey upon the garbage of a circulating library, would be to draw the painful inference that you were destitute of taste, and this I cannot bear to do, even in conjecture. A mind that can take pleasure in the trash of silly novels which may be raked from the charnel houses of literature, deserves to be compared to the female monster, in the Arabian tales, who fed upon dead bodies. I cannot imagine so degraded a state of intellect among the enlightened people of our age and country. But if such a morbid appetite should by chance exist, it should be resisted like the depraved desire to eat chalk and other unnatural food, which betokens a diseased state of the animal system. There can be no regular rule for indulging a taste for the higher works of fancy. Each individual is the best judge of what is safe and salutary for his own case. As particular articles of food disagree with particular constitutions, so there are certain intellectual repasts which cannot be partaken without danger, by minds in a certain state. I once knew a fine girl, who could not venture to read a line of Byron's poetry. She began by reading his works with avidity, as fast as they were published; but they brought on such an unnatural and feverish excitement of her imagination, that she determined to abstain from them as poisonous aliment. I would advise you to keep this rule steadily yourself, and never to read any thing that carries you away from the every-day concerns of life. There are some imaginations that fly away from reason and reality, as soon as they borrow wings from poetry or romance. There are others that merely skim along lightly, and experience a pleasant buoyancy of spirits, from the perusal of the most animated work of fancy. The first should avoid, as dangerous, every thing which tends to

excite them : the last may venture to employ leisure time in light reading. But never suffer yourself to neglect serious study or occupation, for the sake of the finest poem or romance that ever was composed. I would as soon live upon syllabub or honey, as to fill up my mind with the froth and foam of romance ; but I nevertheless eat syllabub with pleasure in its proper place, after I have satisfied myself with nutritious diet ; and I read Scott's romances (some of them) with great pleasure by way of recreation : they relax the mind pleasantly enough, after long tension ; but they would degrade it utterly to frivolity, if nothing more serious was put before them. Read then, solely for recreation, both romances and poetry, unless you find that they unfit you for serious thought ; if they have that effect, discard them, as you have already discarded plays and balls. Every thing that unhinges the mind and slackens the intellectual nerve, is dangerous, and must be avoided. We have too much use for our sober faculties in this perplexed scene of life, to allow them to weaken or droop over fiction or sentiment : the medium is always best and safest.

Some people are so fond of visiting, that they will not mind their own affairs at home ; but we would not therefore prohibit young people from visiting their friends, lest they should contract a habit of gadding. All amusements are dangerous, when the mind becomes exclusively, or disproportionably attached to them ; but no moralist would on that account, prohibit recreations entirely. The abuse of any good thing, is no argument against the judicious use of it. For my part, I wish all our amusements could be intellectual instead of sensual ; and surely one of Scott's best romances, or a sublime piece of poetry, would fill up a leisure hour more profitably than chess, or cards, or riddles, not to mention the senseless games in vogue among the young and thoughtless. The novels of Mrs. Brunton, and Miss Grace Kennedy, are calculated to impress the funda-

mental truths of religion indelibly upon the mind. They exhibit the beauties and advantages of Christian faith and practice, in an interesting delineation of characters drawn from real life. The little work, by the last named author, entitled "Profession not Principle, or the name of Christian not Christianity," contains the best description I have ever seen, of the gradual change which takes place in the heart, when it is renewed by grace. Among the many irreligious persons in our age and country, there are not a few who persist in unbelief, from utter ignorance of the beauties of true Christianity. They have been nurtured in darkness, and therefore do not seek the light. The veil has often been removed from the vision of such people, by a clear and lucid exposition of divine truth, brought before the mind in the narrative form. I remember being greatly aided in my researches by Mrs. Brunton's "Discipline," which came in my way, in the midst of the perplexity attendant on my first examination into the mysteries of revelation. But in recommending works of fiction to you, I would have you clearly to understand, that a solid foundation must be laid in your mind, by serious study, before you raise the superstructure of taste with the above mentioned materials. A regular course of history should be commenced at twelve years of age, and continued with unremitting assiduity until the mind is stored with a connected recollection of important historical events, from the creation to the present day. Beginning at the Old Testament, and following up the sacred records with such ancient history as you can procure, you must endeavour to obtain a general knowledge of the nations whose origin is to be traced in the Bible.

The history of Rome is so deeply interesting, particularly in the days of the republic, that you will need no inducement to study, when you once begin, greater than the passing pleasure of the pursuit. Livy is a delightful historian. He carries you irresistibly along with his narrative, through the

various changes of that vast empire, which was once mistress of the world. Tacitus and Suetonius, as far as they go, fill up some of the chasms in regular history; but after reading Livy, I remember reading Polybius' history of the Punic wars, to carry on the chain of events. Middleton's life of Cicero, is a finished chronicle of the times in which that celebrated Roman lived; and Gibbon gives you a full, though rather verbose, narrative of the decline and fall of that mighty empire. Plutarch's Lives should be read and re-read, until all their contents are indelibly fixed on the memory. It is best to read them in connexion with history; that is, to take up each life as you come to the period at which each character flourished.*

* History should always be read with geography, for it is impossible to remember events, unless in connexion with the places at which they happened. Dates should also be scrupulously recorded, and extracts of important events, with the times at which they happened, and a brief geographical notice of places rendered celebrated by their occurrence, should form a regular volume in every young lady's library. It is pleasant as well as profitable, to be able to refer to such a summary of our youthful studies, when years have passed over our heads, and dimmed the recollection of early pursuits. It often happens, that such reminiscences awaken trains of thought favourable to mental or spiritual improvement. It is sometimes useful to compare present with past feelings; to measure the sober march of chastened intellect, with the full, overflowing ebullition of fresh springing thoughts and feelings.

Extracts from history should be interspersed with such reflections as arise spontaneously in the mind while reading. These serve to mark the progress of the judgment towards maturity. It is a profitable exercise to compare these reflections at different periods, that we may accurately ascertain the developement of reason under this process of mental instruction. I often carry myself back to the earliest season of youth, by looking over a book of extracts from history read at that period: this enables me to realize my own state of mind at that season of immaturity.

In reading Gibbon, I would have you remember that his principles are dangerous; but his mode of treating the subject of Christianity, will doubtless shock your orthodoxy. His celebrated chapter on the causes of the progress of Christianity, is thought, by shallow minded people, to contain conclusive arguments against that holy religion; but a true Christian is safe from his sophistry, and a child in faith can refute his boasted reasoning. The incongruity of supposing that persecution could advance the interests of any cause, is too striking to be overlooked by a tyro in logic. How much more rational it is to deduce from this circumstance a powerful proof of the strength of that cause which surmounts persecution, and triumphs against opposition. Had this thing originated in man's devices, man *could* and *would* have overthrown it. But as it came from God himself, it will prosper under his providence.

The history of Greece should be taken up at its proper time, and read in connexion with that of Rome. Gillies is a pleasing writer; and you will fancy yourself reading a romance when you take up Anacharsis. With regard to the history of England, Hume has been discarded by the best judges, and Baxter and Rapin substituted in his place. La Cretelle is the most pleasing historian of France, and his "*Precis de la Revolution*," is a deeply interesting narrative. Voltaire's General History, and his age of Lewis XIV. will be always read with pleasure. The "*Henriade*" of the same author is a historical poem, and the best known specimen of French epic poetry. Some of Voltaire's dramatic works are pleasing, but no female can contaminate her mind by reading his works of fancy and fiction. I would refer you to the "*Universal History*," a well known work,

I smile over detected errors of judgment, and rejoice that years have added something to my stock of discretion, if they have subtracted from my volubility of spirits.

for the most authentic records of those nations mentioned in the Bible. You must of course read all Robertson's Histories ; as they are indispensable items in the catalogue of useful reading. With regard to American history, there is so little, that you must read all you can procure.

The French language is almost essential to a well educated woman ; and yet I would not have you read much of the most celebrated literature of that nation. Rousseau I would prohibit entirely, and, as I have before stipulated, much of Voltaire's immoral trash. Among the female writers of France, I would recommend Madam de Genlis, as she has written professedly for her own sex. Yet I cannot but object to her plan of education, that it tends to inculcate *double dealing* ; or to speak more cautiously, it does not advocate that singleness of heart and freedom from duplicity, which is the principal charm of woman. In other respects her morality is pure, and her style is certainly highly pleasing. Madam de Stael Holstein, though the greatest genius of the age, is not a model for women ; her declared infidelity and her romantic turn of thought, together with her *practice*, make her rather a warning than an example to her sex. Her works of fiction are alluring from the beauty of her style, and the highly wrought tone of romance which pervades them. But all her rational feelings, and even her principles, seem to evaporate in the mystifying vapour of sentiment. She would make woman a thing to be worshipped on an altar ; not a rational being, whose intelligent and active exertions are to afford a perennial source of comfort to mankind. I would not advise you to read her "Corrinné," or her "Delphine," lest your imagination should become infected with the over exquisite fashion of her refinement. Women who are determined (as I trust you are) to be rational and useful, must keep a strict guard over their sensibilities, instead of surrendering them to the guidance of the high priestess of romance. Madam Cottin is

a less exceptionable specimen of French authoresses. Her novels are pleasing without being dangerous; for they skim lightly over the fancy, without stirring it too deeply. The imagination is the avenue to the heart. Some writers sport awhile in its mystic windings, without reaching the sanctum sanctorum of feeling. While others possess a subtle power, which penetrates at once to the citadel, and usurps rule over the impulses. I would have you, my dear girl, always in possession of your own rational judgment, in all things concerning your dearest interests. Women who exalt their imaginations by the overheated ebullitions of sentimental writers, place themselves in the dangerous condition of being overcome by morbid feeling, or misled by false reasoning. Love is omnipotent with this class of writers, and the female heart is softened to puerile weakness, by being persuaded to submit to its usurpations, without appeal to reason. But love is in fact a dangerous passion, which must be subjected to vigorous control; for it will subvert the peace of the individual who allows its predominance. So much mischief has befallen those who have acquiesced in its tyranny, that the world should have, ere this, gained wisdom from experience. But young hearts are open to its wiles, and it is necessary to put them on their guard. I have pursued this subject far enough, and will conclude for the present with best wishes to my dear young friend.

LETTER XXIV.

Self-Deception Exemplified.

MY DEAR MARY,

I have lately witnessed a scene, which I may well describe to you in connexion with the subject of my last letter. The daughter of one of my earliest friends, has lately received her summons to quit the fleeting things of time, and

embark on the shoreless ocean of eternity. Five years ago, this young lady publicly professed religion, and took upon her the emphatic name and privileges of the Christian. She had been educated among thoughtless, but amiable people, and received her first impressions of the importance of Christianity, from a missionary who accidentally passed through her neighbourhood. From this time Agnes Somerton, for that was her name, avowed a determination to persist in her researches after divine truth, until her mind received full conviction. Her mother was one of those Christians, who had taken up the profession, without any high idea of its requisitions. She was by nature good and amiable, so that her deficiencies in vital piety were not visible to superficial observers. She expressed pleasure at her daughter's convictions, but still was terribly afraid that she might become a *Presbyterian*, alias a *fanatic*. "That sect are so unreasonably strict," said she, "and deny their members so many innocent amusements, that really I find it hard to tolerate them. Some of my near connexions have joined it, and I can assure you they are unpleasant inmates, they have such a cavilling spirit. They can't bear cards, although we never play for money; they won't attend the theatre, or dancing assemblies; and they keep the Sabbath so strangely, that it is any thing but a day of rest, with their Sunday schools and their prayer meetings. Now, for my part, I think it irreverent to be always bringing religion forward: it is a sacred thing, and ought to be kept apart from the ordinary affairs of life."

You may be sure I did not omit the faithful expression of my own principles, on this occasion. I alleged that the Presbyterians were in nothing more strict than evangelical Episcopalians. That religion was the healing branch which should be thrown into all the bitter fountains of human evil. That the Sabbath was a holy day, and ought to be kept sacred. I inquired if she understood the com-

mandment as enjoining any particular portion of that day to be consecrated, while the rest was given over to secular affairs? I urged, that to the truly pious, the whole Sabbath was a precious season of rest to the overtoiled spirit. That the privilege of spending that day in holy thoughts and devout exercises, was immeasurably dear to the true disciple of the Lord Jesus. I asked my friend—"Would you have tired of the Saviour, had it been your lot to have lived with him in the flesh; to have seen and heard him as his disciples—as Mary and Martha did?" She readily answered, that she certainly should not have wearied of his actual presence. I replied, "Neither should we become tired of holding communion with him by faith, at his own appointed season. If we spend the Sabbath with him, he will spend the rest of the week with us; but if we only give him an hour or two of his own day, we have no right to expect his abiding presence during our season of worldly employment." As for balls and plays, I observed that they were not so much prohibited by any rules of the church, as that people who were capable of appreciating the joys of religion, wanted no fictitious aid to promote cheerfulness. That they rejected spontaneously, and of free choice, those pleasures which took away their thoughts from holy things. "As for all that," said my friend, "I am free to say, that I have done very well without it, and wish to continue as I am. I have heard, indeed, that some Episcopalian ministers are becoming strict in these matters, but I am glad I don't belong to any of their churches. Our pastor is an excellent man, and nobody ever heard him object to an innocent game at cards, or balls, and plays. He says the theatre is very improving to the manners and understanding, besides affording the purest standard for pronunciation and grammar." To all this, I vainly attempted to apply common sense, and even common piety; but I was pleased to find that Agnes listened approvingly, and when we parted,

asked me to correspond with her on the subject of her new convictions. To this I readily agreed ; but after replying to three or four of my letters, in the free, fluent language of the heart, she suddenly discontinued her communications. I was told that her mother prohibited our correspondence, on the plea that I was teaching Agnes a religion so different from her own, that she would have no pleasure in her daughter's conversion. I sighed at this intelligence, and continued to pray fervently, that both mother and daughter might be guided in the right way.

A fortnight ago, I heard that Agnes had been in a gradual decline, which had been overlooked by her friends, until the disease had triumphed over her native strength of constitution. I hastened to the house, and found the family in that state of overpowering terror and affliction, which sufficiently proves the want of spiritual strength to sustain the evils of life. Prosperity had kept off serious thoughts, till their minds had become unable to bear them. The mother wrung her hands in agony, and exclaimed, " Oh, my Agnes !—Tell me, do you think her in danger?" Alas, my first view of the transparent skin, the hectic glow ; the first sound of the sepulchral voice ; the tightened breath, which plainly indicated decay in the seat of respiration—all spoke too plainly to allow me to conceal the truth for a moment. " You must lose your child for the present, but you will be reunited at no distant period, never to endure separation again," was my reply to the distracted mother. " Oh !" said she, " I cannot live without her : what shall I have to sweeten life when she is gone?" " Resignation," replied I, " will make your grief endurable. Have you not received great and continued good from your God, and can you not now submit to whatever evil he may choose to send you?" " Oh no, no !" replied she, I have not learnt to submit to evil : my religion has taught me to be thankful for benefits, but that was when I thought they

would never be withdrawn. I am sure I have never missed a night, for twenty years, returning thanks in the very same words for all my blessings, and I have often done that, when my heart was very full of cares and fears about some of my worldly affairs, but still I offered up thanks, because I thought such an expression of gratitude would save my blessings from being taken away." "God loves a grateful heart," said I, "but I fear your thanksgiving was not of the right sort to be acceptable." "Why not?" said she quickly, "when my thanks were offered up in the prescribed language of the church to which I belong? Nobody can accuse me of having neglected any of its observances, and poor Agnes has been still more strict. Often have I known her to come home from a ball or play, fatigued to death, and yet she would not go to sleep until somebody had read to her a chapter in the Bible, and a form of prayer. She has been exemplary in performing her religious duties, I assure you; but her nerves are affected, poor child, and she talks in the most distressing manner about her sins. I tell her, that I am the best judge of her conduct, and I have never known her to commit any sins.* To be sure, there is original sin, which every one partakes of, but we are given to understand that the blood of Jesus washes away that stain."

I will not detain you longer with the detail of these melancholy errors, but will proceed to describe the situation of the poor young woman herself. She pressed my hand silently, when I took a seat beside her; her countenance underwent a sad variety of changeful expressions, in which I read plainly all the agonies of retrospection. At length she spoke—"You warned me faithfully," said she; "I acquit you of having any share in my ruin." Oh, what must have been her feelings at that moment! "Is your pros-

* Fact.

pect dark?" asked I. "As dark as remorse and fruitless conviction can make it," said she with a burst of tears. "I awake from a dream of error and delusion, to contemplate the awful certainty of being weighed in the balance and found wanting. Conscience, like a lagger in duty, now shows me what I have left undone: oh, that I had listened to its still small voice, when it first whispered truth to my heart. But folly had sounded her tocsin, and all remonstrance was vain. Oh," added she with sudden and awful animation—"Oh that I could at this moment assemble the young, the thoughtless, and the vain, around my dying bed; I would thrill to the centre of their hearts, a warning that could never be forgotten. I would say to them, 'Behold the fruits of folly, and see the end of fashion!' That idol, like Juggernaut in his triumphal car, crushes beneath his armed wheels, the wretches who prostrate themselves at his shrine. Behold a victim, who, forearmed and forewarned, has yet offered up her soul to the monster! I go to receive the award of my deeds, done in the flesh against the warning of the Spirit. Oh, let none suppose that an outward conformity to the rules of any church, is religion. I have mistaken the shadow for the substance; and oh! that I could be the last victim of such delusion. Bring forth the trappings of fashion—the wages of sin—the price of my immortal soul! See here,"—and she held up various articles of decoration—"See here: for this, and this, and such paltry, contemptible trifles, did I forsake the path of salvation, and follow the multitude to destruction. Yes, the road to ruin is indeed a beaten track, and many there be that follow it; while that narrow path that leadeth to eternal life, has few, and far between, along its peaceful track. Oh, that I had been one of those few!—I might have been; for I had warning—timely warning," said she, turning to me. "But it is too late: the wheel has but few revolutions to make around the cistern, before the cord will be broken,

and the spirit released for ever ! Mother," said she, turning to her afflicted parent who just then crept into the room—"mother, I request that all my trinkets may be sold for the benefit of the poor ; after having destroyed my soul let them do some good in this wicked world ; and oh, dear mother, bring up my little sister to dress plainly, and not to love pleasure as I have done ; make her sensible from my example, of the ruinous consequences of sin ; for, oh mother ! though your kindness has given it another name, my life has been spent in sin. Oh, the warnings that I have neglected—the spiritual evidences that I have resisted. Now they all appear perfectly comprehensible to me ; now the veil of vanity is removed. Oh how slight is its texture—how lighter than gossamer its materials ! and yet it obscured my mental vision as effectually as midnight darkness : it concealed truth from my mind, until it is too late to derive any benefit from its holy radiance."

She continued to speak in this manner, until a violent paroxysm of the consumptive cough impeded her utterance. The cough brought on a discharge of blood from the lungs, and the physician forbade further exertion of speech. But oh, the eloquent agony of that silent countenance ! I knelt beside her, and prayed, but she made signs that prayer was unavailing. Yet I could see that her own mind was engaged in agonizing supplication. Her eyes were upraised, and cold drops of dew stood on her livid brow. One of her ornaments, a diamond ring, still hung on her emaciated finger. She took it off, and pointing to a Bible which lay on the table, put the ring in my hand. I asked her if she wished the ring to be disposed of, and its proceeds spent in Bibles for the destitute ? she signified her assent by a significant gesture. She then opened a casket which stood near her, and took out a splendid watch and seals, and at the same moment opening the Bible, she laid them on this sentence—"Go preach my gospel unto all nations."

I asked if she gave it to the missionary cause? Another signal of assent closed our conference, for she soon fell back in a state of insensibility, from which she never entirely recovered. But oh, how different was the expression of her dying countenance, from that of your mother, my Mary. The one was a foretaste of heaven, the other betokened fearful doubts and agonies. I cannot describe the situation of the mother, when all was over. She then awoke to a full extent of misery. "My child is gone, and they say she is not gone to heaven! How is that?—Was she not a Christian?—Am not I a Christian?—Who dares deny it? I am a believer, and will not suffer myself to be shaken by fanatical reveries!" Such were her ravings for a time; but I left her completely humbled, and imploring every one to pray for her, that she might be converted to true religion.

Alas, how common a case is Agnes Somerton's! How many deceive themselves to the last moment, with the hope, that *they at least* (if no others) will be permitted to serve God and Mammon; to carry divine truth about, without using it; to believe in Christ, and yet not serve him; to have the reward promised to faithful servants, without having done any thing to merit it. Oh, could such people be assured, that they cannot have their good things in this world and the next too; that they must serve God diligently, or they will not receive the wages of service! They must choose between time and eternity; and when their choice is made, they must abide by it. Choose now, my dear Mary, and let yours be a right choice. O, may you have grace given you to abide by it, prays

Your true friend.

LETTER XXV.

Female Attainments in Science and Literature.

MY DEAR MARY,

Science is now so much simplified, that women have time as well as talents to become acquainted with its elements. Joyce's Scientific Dialogues contain much that is agreeable and useful; and I would recommend their attentive perusal to all my young female friends. Other elementary works are daily pouring from the press, in this prolific age; and doubtless, even while I am penning this sentence, new efforts are making to smooth the path of knowledge, so as to render its high places accessible to female talent and industry. There is something delightful in the free, familiar exercise of the rational faculties. The utmost art of education can do no more than excite a desire for improvement, and form the habit of persevering application. No human skill can impart knowledge, unless there is a predisposition in the mind to receive it. The aim of the teacher, therefore, should be to awaken intelligent curiosity first, and afterwards furnish it proper means of gratification. It is easy, when a right method is adopted, to awaken the attention of a mere child, to some of the most important facts in science or philosophy. But to do this, the teacher must be familiar with the things to be taught. There must be no boggling or confusion in the explanations given, or the mind will be perplexed instead of enlightened. I have explained to a child of seven years old, the whole Copernican system, with the aid of a ball, a knitting-needle, and a candle to represent the sun. But the faculties of children must be developed by conversation, or they will shrink from undertaking these things. A judicious, intelligent mother may prepare her child for receiving eternal benefit from an ordi-

nary system of instruction. But it is very discouraging to teachers, to find the children intrusted to their care, with minds as it were hermetically sealed to knowledge, from their having been left undisturbed to their own puerilities. Parents should converse on all improvable topics with their children. They should ascertain the innate bias both of mind and disposition, so as to prepare as soon as possible for that system of culture, which is to correct the evil, and mature the good of each individual.

There is at present, a general outcry against teachers, throughout our country, and it is true that those who undertake this important charge, are seldom duly qualified ; but it is also true, that the early education of children is so much neglected, that they go to school with habits little favourable to improvement. They come to their teachers with self-will strong enough to overthrow all ordinary restraints ; and minds so inured to ignorance, that the desire of intellectual improvement can scarcely be awakened. Idleness, the fruitful source of vice, has settled like an incubus on the dormant faculties ; and this spell must be broken, before there can be a hope of kindling the torch of intellect. This is the province, not of the tutor, but of the parent ; and the blame of many an utter failure in education, may be traced back to the mismanagement of early childhood.

I once heard a lady allege, in extenuation of some reprehensible act of indulgence to her son, that he was soon going to school, poor boy, where he would be kept strict enough. And some parents give their children such unlimited license during their vacation, that they go back to school totally unhinged from every salutary restriction, and prompt enough to rebel against efficient discipline. I do not in the least doubt, but this error is the cause of the insubordination so notorious in Virginia seminaries of learning. The youth of our state are accustomed from infancy to have their whims gratified, and their irregular desires indulged by the menials

who swarm around them. Parents are not sufficiently aware, that habits of tyranny as well as idleness, are formed by their children in the domestic circle. They should carefully prevent these mischiefs, by keeping their offspring as much as possible in their presence, and thus counteract the baleful effects of our national misfortune. Children will exercise self-will, if they are not sedulously guarded against it, and the peculiarities of the domestic establishments of Virginia give free scope to this propensity. The unfortunate beings who surround our homes, and constitute a portion of every family, are by nature and habit the fosterers of moral evil. In every social circle, the tenants of the cradle and the nursery are committed to their charge. The seeds of vice are scattered secretly with the very aliment that sustains life. The danger is imminent, and the eyes of those appointed to ward it off, are too often closed in careless supineness or infatuated ignorance. It is here that female influence is so immeasurably important. The tender and judicious mother feels in her heart's core the threatened evil, as it approaches insidiously towards the children of her love. She guards every avenue with watchful discretion, and hallows with her prayers the cherished circle, round which her thoughts and affections hover ceaselessly. She labours to impart to her servants the fundamental rules of morality, and opens to them the source of divine truth. She prepares and enforces a code of regulations, which prevent the most dreaded evils to which her offspring are exposed. It is her constant aim to widen and deepen every impression of virtue that their minds are susceptible of, and in due time she forms for herself a set of honest, respectable domestics, who, together with her children, "look up to her, and call her blessed."

There is no evil so great as not to admit of alleviation; and it is my determined opinion, that females have it in their power, not only to mitigate the grievances of slavery to the

unfortunate beings themselves, but to prevent the deleterious influence of their example on the domestic circle. They should instruct their servants carefully in morality and religion. They should treat them with scrupulous kindness; but carefully keep them from temptation, and give them constant employment. At the same time, they should have their own little independent interests, and their owners should advance these whenever they possibly can; so as to let them perceive that they are regarded as fellow beings. Of all the sources of mismanagement most prolific of mischief, the too most common one is, *incessant scolding*. I know families where this evil has reached such a pitch, as to destroy domestic quiet. The truth is, that women find it difficult and troublesome to manage their servants, and they fall into the obvious mistake of continual reproof. There never was, and never will be, the slightest success attending this method. On the contrary, the mischief is obvious and incalculable. I cannot believe, that any rational being ever seriously contended for the expediency of this unnatural plan of inducing obedience. But it is easier to indulge the oft-excited temper, than to restrain it, and nothing is plainer than the usual excuse—"I must reprove when they deserve it, and my servants always deserve reproof." Now to me, this declaration is equivalent to an acknowledgement of incapacity. If the servants are rightly managed, they will not need reproof. One fact is indisputable, and that is, that incessant scolding will make the best servants bad, instead of making the worst good; ay, and it will make the best temper bad, to indulge this mistaken habit. My neighbour Aspasia never fails to entertain me, when I visit her, with a catalogue of the faults she has to contend with in her servants. She gives me to understand, that she is an excellent manager of servants, but that she has unluckily the worst set in the world to manage. "Now if I had such domestics as Mrs. —," says she, "I would get a great deal more out

of them than she does. I could do wonders with them; and as it is, their mistress is a poor manager. She indulges a great deal too much, and never reproves at all."

It so happened, that Aspasia procured one of Mrs. ——'s servants; one, too, who had borne an excellent character. After a week or two of trial, I went to congratulate her on having succeeded in her wish. I pleased myself as I went along, with the anticipated good humour of my neighbour, and hoped I should see at least one pleasant countenance among her attendants. When I entered the house, the first person I met was the servant above mentioned, whom I had often seen in the dwelling of her former mistress. She looked gloomy and discontented, her appearance was sluttish, and there was an air of sullenness about her, which betokened intended resistance. By and by Aspasia came, and her first words announced the disappointment I was beginning to anticipate. "Mrs. —— must be a strange sort of a manager," observed she, after the first salutations were over. "I think the servant I have got from her is, without exception, the worst I ever had. At first she was tolerable, but I soon saw her cloven foot, and when I told her that such behaviour would not do *for me*, she burst into tears, and cried like a baby, saying that she had never been used to scolding, and it would break her heart. I was so provoked at this, that I could not restrain myself.—'Heart, indeed!' said I, 'and pray what business have you with a heart?—are you not my slave? and cannot I do as I please with you? But I suppose Mrs. —— consulted your feelings, and made an intimate friend of you. If that is the way in which she gets a character for good management, she is welcome to keep it for me. I know too well what belongs to my own dignity to put up with such sentimental nonsense.' In short, I won't tell you all my trials with the creature; but she has been subjected to my usual course of discipline, and has proved so refractory, that I shall part with her as

soon as possible. Mrs. — must never talk to me about management again," &c.

I will spare you the rest of Aspasia's rant, for truly it made me uncomfortable for a whole day. She is one of those *self-admirers*, who will never allow herself to be surpassed in any object of her ambition. It has long been her dearest wish to be thought a *good housewife*, and she mistakes self-approbation for success. Though her fortune has been gradually diminishing, and her domestic comforts decreasing under her much vaunted system, she still adheres to it, and attributes the success of those who pursue a different method, to what she calls good luck. The truth is, that she expects too much from her servants, in return for their daily bread and yearly clothing. As their work serves her to boast of, they must do a great deal, or she cannot keep up her reputation as a good housewife. With all her powers of coercion, she cannot get more than a certain quantity of labour from them; and, as that is not enough for her to establish a high character for skill in domestic management, she gives way to spleen and mortification. I will conclude this letter by asking you to compare Aspasia with Emilia.

I am ever yours.

LETTER XXVI.

Misery of Discordant Marriages.

MY DEAR MARY,

Of all the evils attendant on discordant marriages, one of the most formidable is, the inevitable effect of such examples on the offspring of ill-assorted unions.

Children are inestimable blessings in happy wedlock ;

but they enhance the miseries of the discordant couple. With the amiable, they are additional bonds of union; but with the contentious, they are sources of discord. I can scarcely imagine a scene of greater misery, than is daily exhibited around the fireside of a quarrelsome married pair. The most minute trifles are sufficient to give a sombre colouring to the daily intercourse of persons, who should be living springs of comfort to each other. Parents sit in moody silence, or burst into open objurgations. Children cower around the melancholy circle, as if afraid to bring themselves into notice, lest the collected vials of wrath should descend upon them. Then there is too often a spirit of manœuvring encouraged, among people who find it a matter of supreme difficulty to keep in favour with their rulers. Servants exercise a low cunning to gain the good will of both parties, and children are too apt to imbibe this contagion from their attendants, probably their companions also. Even the lisping babe becomes aware, that to appear fond of one parent, is the surest way to make the other angry. Thus from infancy the habit of dissimulation is implanted—that habit which overthrows all that is generous and noble in the expanding heart. “Mamma won’t love me, if I love papa,” was the innocent reply of a child, when asked if it did not want to see its absent father. The longer a youthful mind can be kept in ignorance of the existence of such a passion as hatred, the better its chance of escaping the contamination of moral evil. But when the passion is in daily and hourly exercise before the developing faculties of children, they become infected with its venom by inevitable consequence. It is said that the offspring of the game cock, inherit turbulence of spirit from the egg-shell, and contend fiercely for supremacy in the mother’s nest. This is too apt to be the case with the children of quarrelsome parents; they become adepts in recrimination and self-justification, before their minds have

been exercised in any useful and profitable train of thought. If there should unfortunately exist in the united head of a family, any propensity to contend about rights, these contentions should be scrupulously kept from the children. But I have seen a fond mother give mental poison to her child, when she would have shrunk with agony from any act which she understood to be injurious to its health or happiness. Social discord is a wide-spreading, deep-rooted evil: it is the mildew that blights the tender shoots of moral worth, and nips in the bud the blossoms of contentment. No family can have room to exercise domestic virtues, when the fireside harmony is profaned by unholy sacrifices. Fierce anger, gloomy moroseness, despotism, and its accompanying evils, subvert social order, and reverse the decrees of omnipotent wisdom. I have known a whole family to be so infected by the contagion of domestic discord, as to grow up with an utter incapacity of enjoying happiness. Their minds had been so inured to the habitual discomfits attendant on their early days, that they could not possess their souls in peace, under circumstances favourable to its enjoyment. They were continually suspecting their associates of injurious designs, and misconstruing trifling and unintentional omissions into serious deficiencies of duty. Their friends were constrained to practice so much minute circumspection of conduct, that they became weary of their responsibilities. This weariness of course was discovered, and drew forth stern reproaches; then followed altercation, which wrought out its usual consequence, total alienation of regard. These unfortunate victims to early mismanagement, were wont to complain (with justice) that they had no friends; and who can maintain a friendship under such tyrannical requisitions? Unless the courtesies of friendship are strictly reciprocal, the tie will inevitably be loosened, if not dissolved.

One of the surest signs of predominant self-love, may be

discerned in that restless fear of not being sufficiently appreciated, which is so common with suspicious people. When there is a proper degree of humility in the heart, there will be no outward anxieties respecting the degree of courtesy observed by the world. When I hear people accusing others of pride, I always set it down as a proof that they have a great deal themselves. For if they had not expected a great deal of respectful attention themselves, they would not have been led to remark the deficiencies of their associates. I have sometimes amused myself by remarking the behaviour of two classes of people brought together by casualty ; each prepared to accuse the other of pride, because each was unwilling to render such a measure of attention as the other exacted. A little self-examination would have rectified both errors, by discovering the source of them. Why am I so suspicious of these people ? and why am I hurt because they behave haughtily to me ? The true answer would be, because I think a great deal of myself, and claim more respect than these people are willing to pay !

How many mistakes might be rectified by a little knowledge of one's own motives. Self-knowledge is indispensable to true wisdom. All the information in the world, abstracted from self, will not aid us in forming a just estimate of ourselves, without which we cannot possibly be just to others. How many evils grow out of this species of ignorance ! It is the true source of conjugal discord, and all its accompanying miseries. If every married pair could be brought to practise self-examination rigidly, there would be an end of recrimination, which is the fruitful source of discord. *Self-accusation* would be substituted in its place, and each party would find with surprise, that instead of carrying the war into the enemy's country, they must maintain it at home, against their own internal enemies. I once knew an instance of a married pair, who had rendered themselves

obnoxious to the whole circle of their friends and kindred, by their incessant wrangling. Every meal was attended with such interruptions to harmony, that even the nearest family connexions declined partaking their hospitality. "Better the dinner of herbs, where love is, than the stalled ox, and hatred therewith"—was remembered and quoted by all their acquaintance. And truly, it was almost impossible to avoid touching on some subject of contention. You might drag the attention of this couple for a moment, as far as the poles from the subject of debate, and yet they would force it back again with incredible ingenuity. One gentleman who wished to dine with them, bragged that he would keep the peace by turning the subject of conversation to Symme's theory of the earth. Accordingly he explained, with a great deal of interest, the imaginary country within the excavated poles, and kept on safe ground for ten or fifteen minutes. He was forced to pause, however, when he had literally exhausted himself in explanation. The lady immediately observed with a sigh, that she should like much to retreat to that country, if she could be assured that none of her troubles would follow her. She looked so significantly at her husband, that he could not resist the appeal. "Oh," said he, "that is the very place I should go to myself." "Then I should stay at home," answered the affectionate wife. The gentleman could not resist the opportunity of saying a good thing, not being at all unwilling to wound their feelings. He said he had heard of the Irishman's dividing the house with his wife, by giving her the outside; but that this husband's plan was certainly more efficient—to divide the *earth* in the same manner,—leaving his wife on the outside, while he crept into the snug comforts of the interior.

This wife was arrested in her career of folly and wickedness by hearing a sermon upon these words—"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."

The preacher enlarged on the *possibility* of living peaceably, by showing how self-denial might be practised, so as to force the most irascible temper to refrain from aggression. The unhappy wife determined to try this expedient with her husband. At first she found the task exceedingly difficult. The habit of self-defence was so strong, that she could not immediately check the words that rose spontaneously to her tongue, but her heart was seriously impressed with a sense of past error, and she resolutely undertook to subject her tongue to rigid control. In this good resolution she was aided by the Spirit of God, which was even then, though unknown to her, at work in her heart. Her husband was at first surprised, and afterwards pleased, with her amendment. He was not an intemperate man, and his temper of course was not entirely brutalized. He became aware that he too had been in fault, and finding the way made smooth for him, he followed the example of his wife. In process of time, they became a peaceable, amiable couple, and are at this present time good Christians and good citizens; as happy in each other as if they had never been otherwise. Their first child, who, unfortunately, had his temper formed while their discord was at its crisis, has grown up very unamiable, and of course unhappy. The parents are fully sensible that they brought this evil upon themselves; therefore they bear it patiently, and do all they can, not only to amend their eldest born, but to preserve the others from similar contagion.

It has often occurred to me, while listening to the cavillers at religion, that a powerful argument in favour of its efficiency might be drawn from facts of a similar nature to the one I have just narrated. Has any thing, save Christianity, been yet discovered, of sufficient power to arrest vice in its mad career; and to turn the torrent of evil, when it was sweeping away even the landmarks from the human heart, and desolating the meager virtues implanted there by nature?

Show me an instance of reformation from habitual vice, wrought by mere human powers, and I will then accede to the "Omnipotence of Reason," so proudly contended for by philosophers. But such things cannot be shown, because they do not exist. I have known instances in the course of my experience, of amiable, respectable people, falling off through temptation from their virtuous courses, when they were not upheld by religion. And I have known instances where vice has been stopt in its headlong progress, through the instrumentality of the vital principle of Christianity.

There were once two brothers, to whom I shall give the names of Marcus and Portius. The first was a strictly moral man; the last had fallen into dissolute habits, and was losing fast the respect of all his friends and kindred. Marcus expostulated with his brother, and talked eloquently of the beauty of virtue as an abstract principle, and the moral sublimity of an upright character. Both these brothers were ignorant of vital religion. In process of time, Portius wasted his substance like the prodigal in Scripture, and ended a course of riotous living in poverty and neglect. Meanwhile Marcus arose to prosperity, and enjoyed the respect of all the moral part of society. He increased his goods, and determined that his soul should take its ease, and enjoy the reward of his good conduct. While Portius was undergoing the agonies of remorse, with scarcely food to sustain life, Marcus was opening his house to the fashionable and wealthy, who did him honour by participating in his prosperity. By and by he became fond of the social glass, and soon learnt to extend his festive enjoyments to the daily potation of one bottle, which his companions affirmed to be the ultimatum of a gentleman. If the recollection of his former advice to Portius on the subject of temperance crossed his mind, it was quieted by the ready excuse, that Portius was too poor to drink wine, and Marcus himself was wealthy. His wealth was self-earned, *there-*

fore he had a right to spend it as he pleased. For a long time he resisted the temptation to exceed his daily bottle, and even went so far, as to have his wine decanted into larger bottles, that he might not exceed the *genteel* measure. Presently he became bloated and unhealthy, but who ever heard of good wine, *taken in moderation*, disagreeing with the constitution? While this deterioration of principle was gradually taking place, Portius was reviving, under the influence of religious conviction, from a state of almost despairing humiliation. He felt the weight of his sins, and sought Him who has promised rest to the weary-laden. There had been no intercourse between the brothers for many years; as Portius had forsaken friends and kindred to carry on his vicious practices. At length the repentant prodigal returned full of rejoicing to the land that gave him birth. "I will seek out my dear Marcus," said he, "now that I am not unworthy to associate with his virtues. We will live and die together. If he has not found out the way of truth before, I will show it him, in return for his former endeavours to lead me aright." Alas! these reveries were soon at an end. Portius arrived at his brother's grand house, and found it full of minions of the law, who were appropriating all its gorgeous furniture to rapacious creditors. Marcus had just breathed his last; and Portius, unknown to any present, pressed in to see the bloated and disfigured corse. "What was the cause of his death?" asked he. One of the bystanders whispered, "He died of apoplexy, the consequence of intemperate habits. He has been a lover of wine for many years, and seldom took less than two bottles a day. Poor fellow! *that*, and hardened infidelity, were his greatest faults. To the last he denied the existence of a God, and said that he had found it very easy to practice virtue without the aid of religion. 'I have always maintained a good character,' said he, 'and have amassed a good fortune; what more do I need?'" Portius shud-

dered at these words. He waited for the investigation of his brother's affairs, and learned that all his wealth had been swallowed up in gradual dissipation. It was Marcus' custom to talk of his former reputation for sobriety, until he had lost it so entirely in progressive habits of dissipation, that even his friends smiled at his self-complacent boastings. But no one ventured to undeceive him: *that* would have been the part of Christian friendship. He died without having his eyes opened to the error of his ways; and Portius lived to give ample testimony of the power of religious principle, over innate propensities or acquired habits of vice.

Look abroad, and see if there are no Marcuses near us !
Adieu, my dear girl, I am

Ever yours.

LETTER XXVII.

Prevailing Errors in Female Education.

MY DEAR MARY,

Women whose lots are cast in the higher walks of life, have one talent which they may use for the benefit of thousands; I mean influence. It is to be lamented that our *fashionable* ladies are far more intent upon misleading than benefiting their fellow beings, by the use of this talent. Instead of setting an example of moderation in expense and luxury, they lavish their wealth upon a thousand useless, not to say pernicious things. If ladies in the high circles of life would practise forbearance and economy in their personal expenses; if they would live plainly, dress unostentatiously, and give their superfluities to charitable institutions,

there would doubtless be a general improvement of the aspect of things in this our world; but we see nothing so praiseworthy in their conduct. The rich have no more to give away than the poor, for their wants are so exorbitant that the gifts of providence, however lavish, prove barely sufficient to gratify them. Could not this evil be amended? Suppose our leaders of the *ton* could be made aware that extravagant apparel does not make them more attractive in the eyes of the nice-judging, would they not abate something from their superfluities, to throw a mite into the Lord's treasury? Or, is there really so much rational enjoyment in superabundant decoration, that it cannot be renounced? Suppose each female was to enter into a strict calculation of the expense of some superfluous article, and inquire seriously of her heart and understanding, whether she could not be just as happy without it, as with it? This species of investigation would lead females to form some estimate of the yearly, monthly, daily cost of their extrinsic decorations. At present, they thoughtlessly follow the multitude to do evil, or rather, I fear I must say, that they only follow the beaten track of vanity, into which their mothers took care to lead them from childhood. Alas! that the rising generation should have to endure the accumulated follies of the by-past age, from the consequences of which so many are now suffering. But I repeat the assertion, that unless women of wealth and high station in society will consent to use their influence to exterminate this evil, there is no knowing how far it will advance in another age. Let them but magnanimously strip off their redundant decorations, and set an example of plainness in apparel; for instance, the quantity of silk now requisite to make a dress, is said to be eighteen or twenty yards; more than half of this is frittered away in flounces, arranged tier above tier, till they reach the knee. I would propose to some lady who is high in station, to resolve on an instantaneous abridgment of

these decorations. Let her but appear in a dress without flounces, and declare to her followers and satellites, that she intends clothing the indigent from the trappings of the vain, and I doubt not but her example will prove contagious. But at present, the rich and distinguished come forth so magnificently equipped, that all the weak and vain are excited to emulation. They look on, half-admiring, half envying, and sigh to think that fortune has denied them the privilege of adorning their perishing bodies with gaudy or expensive clothing; and this folly will continue, while females who have influence refuse to exert it for the improvement of their fellow beings. I know that many *would-be* modest women, will disclaim the pre-eminence assigned to them, and will deny that they have sufficient influence to do this good. But let them try, and let them examine into the present state of things, and inquire whether they are not now influencing some of their friends and acquaintances to follow fashion, or to commit excesses in extravagance. There are women in the world too, to whom God has given personal beauty—that most precarious boon. Suppose, instead of misusing or abusing this gift, they were to apply it to the purpose of increasing their influence, and enlarging their means of doing good. And here again, I must break a lance with the mothers of the present day. They nurture their beautiful daughters in vanity, and I am afraid I must say folly, for I can think of no softer word. Instead of training them to regard personal charms as a snare, to escape which they must lay up a double stock of good sense and discretion, they deepen the pit, and lead their helpless offspring blindfold into its bosom. Oh, how many have been irreparably lost to all that is rational and valuable in life, by the incautious vanity of those whom years should have trained to greater wisdom. I do know to a certainty, that a mother may educate a beautiful daughter, so as to make her all that a discreet,

amiable, unpretending woman should be. It is only pointing out to her the precarious nature of the gift she possesses. Only warning her against the snares that will be laid to entrap her, on her entrance into life. Only cultivating her mind even more assiduously than if she was deficient in personal charms, for she has greater need of a strong intellect, to enable her to detect the illusions and spells that will be cast around her. Tell her in childhood—"You will probably be handsome when you grow up; and you will meet with flatterers who will exaggerate your attractions, and strive to make you overvalue them. Endeavour to guard against these snares. Remember how uncertain is the duration of those charms, which a fever, or a disease of any other kind, can wither in a day. Think you that beauty lessens your accountability at the throne of heaven? Think you that he whose eyes search your heart, will be attracted by your extrinsic graces? Keep in mind, that pride and vanity are the sins of your nature, and that both these are fostered by the possession of beauty, unless it is accompanied with sound sense and discretion. Think, while your flatterers are sounding praises in your ear, of that honest hour when you will be compelled to surrender these transitory advantages—the hour of death. How will you feel, when the last pangs of nature rack your dissolving tabernacle, if you have to look back upon a life misspent in folly and vanity?"

With such representations as these, frequently and *honestly* made, the greatest beauty may be preserved from the pervading contagion of vanity. But this is far different from the plan of most American mothers. They are themselves intoxicated with *reflected* vanity. Every act of maternal kindness, is mingled with the poison of adulation. The expanding belle sees herself the object of unlimited attention. Every hour brings an accession to her self-importance. She finds herself exalted above her plain or homely

sisters or companions. Is it not perfectly natural that she should set an undue value upon that which her *parents* think of such importance? and is it not also evident, that if those parents were to speak rationally before her, and set beauty in its proper place in their own estimation, that she would spontaneously imbibe their opinions, and make up her own judgment accordingly? Affectionate parents can make their children believe whatever truths they please to inculcate.

A handsome woman, without vanity or inordinate pretensions, will (if she is otherwise amiable) acquire influence in society unconsciously to herself. Beauty finds an advocate in almost every bosom, when accompanied with those moral and intellectual qualities which are essential to excellence. But when alloyed with affectation and self-esteem, it only meets the applause of foolish people. I have known so many instances, in which personal beauty has proved a snare to its possessor, that I own I do not covet it for those I love. There are so many things to fear, where this precarious boon of nature is overvalued, that life is deprived of half its most innocent pleasures. Sickness, and above all, old age, with many other things too tedious to mention, are so many sources of disquietude to the self-important belle. And when she marries, she either continues to consider herself an idol to be worshipped, instead of a rational companion to be esteemed; or she sinks into melancholy moping, from the disappointment of her ill-founded hopes of happiness. Having always considered herself a creature above the common grade of humanity—a vessel made of the porcelain clay of the earth, and not intended for ordinary uses,—her mind is in a state of unnatural inflation. She cannot sink to her own level, but remains buoyed up on the waves of vanity, until she is fairly wrecked against that well-known rock called vexation of spirit. Oh, how many bitter drops do parents infuse into the cup of earthly prosperity, ere it is

presented to the lips of their offspring, by fostering qualities which should be sedulously repressed, and neglecting to cultivate those on which the rational enjoyment of life depends. Women should be formed from the cradle, for the fulfilment of their appointed duties. The term usually allotted to female education, is too brief at best, even supposing that nothing but useful things were taught. Can it then be wonderful that the sex prove unfitted for the rational business of life, when they spend the short season of youth in acquiring what they have to forget or unlearn in after years? Mothers strangely neglect instructing their daughters in domestic arts and domestic economy. Your mother, my dear Mary, must be excepted from this censure. I know you are, even now, expert in the culinary art, and in every possible use of the needle and scissors. I remember her telling me that you rose with the dawn, and overlooked every department of household management. That you strained the milk, weighed the butter, measured the meal and flour,—nay, (do not blush my dear girl,) that you even fed the fowls and fattening pigs with your own delicate hands. I know too, that the same hands touch the piano with taste for the amusement of a friend, and wield the pencil for your pastime. I am aware too, that you keep regular accounts of all your expenditure, and often *deny yourself*, that you may aid the good cause.

These are but your plain and obvious duties, my dear girl, and I do not mention them as any thing unusually praiseworthy. Were you to do less, you would infallibly incur the censure of

Your own and your mother's friend,

LETTER XXVIII.

Domestic Management.

MY DEAR MARY,

As others besides yourself may read the hints I am now throwing together for your benefit, I will consider at greater length, the subject of domestic management.

I know it is unnecessary to exhort you to regard in an especial manner the comfort of your domestics ; but when I look around, and see the abuses sanctioned by custom in our state of society, I tremble for the future responsibility of my countrymen and women. Slavery is indeed a fearful evil ; a canker in the bud of our national prosperity ; a bitter drop in the cup of domestic felicity. But, like all other evils, it admits of mitigation. It is surely the part of wisdom to apply such remedies as our situation affords, to this great and obvious impediment to our national and individual happiness. I blush for my countrymen and their female coadjutors, when I see instances of thoughtless inattention, or cruel neglect, of the comfort of our helpless fellow beings. God has pleased to suffer this state of things among us, but I shudder to think how few are sensible of the responsibility they incur, by holding their fellow creatures in abject and despotical subjection. Until heavenly Mercy sees fit to remove this our great national evil, it surely becomes our duty to consider the subject prayerfully, in all its bearings. It is true, *we* are no way to blame for this state of things. We may rank this misfortune among the tender mercies of our parent country, who inflicted it upon us, to answer her own interested ends. But we should not plunge into an abyss, because we find ourselves standing on its brink ; nor should we rashly incur the penalty of a violated law, because

we are placed in circumstances which make it hard to observe that law strictly.

But of the consequences arising from slavery, one of the most pernicious and least noticed, is its effect on the female temper. I acknowledge it is hard to bear with patience the trials incident to domestic life in Virginia, but I sincerely wish my countrywomen were aware, that they *may* and *must* be borne. The obligation to bear them is imperative, because it involves the eternal happiness of every individual. Awful indeed will be the condition of those slave-holders, who have abused the trust reposed in them, and ill-treated the creatures committed to their charge. I know cruelty to slaves is not now as common as it has been. The progress of civilization, and above all, of gospel light, has taught many people their duty on this momentous subject. But alas! I am forced to acknowledge, that I am acquainted with some strong cases in which this abuse is still tolerated in society. It is not very long since I detected a young and *beautiful* female in inflicting corporal chastisement *with her own hands*, and in severe measure, upon a woman older by many years than herself. "Tell it not in Gath!" lest it give our maligners just occasion to cast further and more direful aspersions upon us. But I trust these instances are rare, and public opinion throws immeasurable obloquy upon them. But the minor evils most common among us, are unfortunately of a nature to pass without observation or censure. They are done in a corner, and besides are done so generally, that custom has cast a veil over them, and almost sanctioned their continuance. How common is it for a mistress of a family to restrain, in a manner bordering on cruelty, the poor abject dependant upon her authority. It is easy enough to point out the master error, which occasions these domestic afflictions. The habit of despotism is formed almost in infancy. The child is allowed to tyrannize over the unfortunate menial appointed to gratify its wants.

Parents allow this abuse of power, without being aware of its fatal tendency. Self-will is fostered from the very cradle, and becomes, in after life, the only rule of exaction from the wretched beings who are trained to minister to this overmastering sin. "You are to do this because *I will it*," is the dictum of the tyrant. Instead of training servants to do the will of God, they are forced to do the will of their earthly masters, even when that will is openly opposed to the divine laws. Are not our servants *compelled* by our authority to break the Sabbath? Do we not require services from them on that day, in open violation of the spirit of the fourth commandment? Do we not daily put strong temptation in their way, to break almost all the laws of the Supreme Being? The very homage that we exact from these forlorn and helpless beings, occasions a breach of the two first commandments; for the implicit obedience and abject submission we require, must perforce impel them to violate the spirit of these commands. Again the incessant provocation heaped upon their undisciplined tempers, too often forces them to take the holy name of God in vain; and if this is done in our presence, we think more of the disrespect offered to our persons, than the awful guilt committed in the sight of God. I do not make this assertion without sufficient warrant. A professor once reproved his servant in my presence, for being guilty of using unholy language *before his earthly master*, while not a word was said of the still greater offence committed against the unseen Jehovah.

To proceed regularly with this examination.—Do masters enforce the holy law of obedience *to parents*, among their servants? I greatly fear not. They care little how these wretched people perform their relative duties, if the paramount one of obedience to their master is duly performed. They even sanction neglect and undutifulness to parents, by utterly omitting to train the children of their

slaves in these moral observances. The common vice of theft is almost inculcated, by putting temptation in their way, and denying to the natural cravings of appetite, all but a pittance of coarse nutriment. How often does the attendant on a well supplied table, see dainties swallowed by his luxurious master, almost to surfeit or satiety, without sharing any but the most essential aliment? Can it be wonderful, that he should gratify his excited appetites clandestinely? Again, we may be said to prompt the breach of the seventh commandment, by our indifference in maintaining the conjugal union among our servants: husband and wife are too often separated for very inadequate causes. Perhaps a momentary pique against one party, occasions the irrevocable dissolution of a union which ought to be held sacred among all conditions of mankind. It may be plead in extenuation, that these people have not a proper value for such moral obligations. But have we laboured to give it them?—have we scrupulously instructed them in the nature of these duties? If not, we have no right to complain of their being disregarded. We cannot expect our domestics not to covet their neighbour's goods, when we take care to display our abundance to their eyes, without gratifying even their most imperious wants. Nor can we wonder that the virtue of truth is so little regarded among them. The nature of the training they receive from infancy, tends directly to the formation of habits of deceit and falsehood. They are driven to exert all their inherent cunning to avoid some of the numberless penalties we inflict upon them. If we give them no higher motive for virtue than the hope of pleasing a capricious despot, whose will changes oftener than they can be prepared to gratify it, how can we expect any sort of excellence from them? While the fear of corporal punishment is their only incentive to obedience, we must not wonder at their contrivances to evade our arbitrary exactions. All that cunning can prompt, and a total disregard

of principle can accomplish, will be put in force against their *legitimate* tyrants.

But the daily and hourly indulgence of peevishness and irritability of temper towards these people, is the cause of much misery in the world. *Slaves* cannot resist any sort of oppression. The domestic circle is too often a scene of self-indulgence, which should put to shame the greatest latitudinarian in morals. All the concentrated gall of an imbittered temper is poured forth without restraint, for the inmates of the domestic sanctuary are helpless sufferers, who rather provoke than repel the most tyrannical aggressions. Children learn to nourish, instead of subduing self-will; for the menials of the nursery dare not resist its despotism. Often does a gray head endure the violence of childish wrath, without redress. But the most deadly of all pernicious habits, is that of putting young slaves to be companions of young children. The infant despot enforces his lawless authority over his allotted victim, and thus encourages all the most malignant vices of his nature. Oh, that I had eloquence enough to persuade the mothers of Virginia, to rescue their beloved offspring from this terrific evil. Let them keep their children from this contagion, and never leave them in the power of their slaves. It is very easy to inculcate a proper way of thinking on this subject. Children should be made sensible of the unfortunate situation of this portion of their fellow beings. They should never be allowed to dictate in any thing themselves. Their parents should direct the requisite degree of superintendence on their offspring, and this should be the least degree possible. Mothers should always dress and undress their own children, unless they chance to have really conscientious and well-principled servants, such as I have sometimes seen. Children should be taught to wait upon each other, as soon as they are old enough to give the requisite assistance reciprocally. A peremptory order should never be given by a

child to a slave; on the contrary, the most scrupulous politeness should be exacted from the younger members of the family, towards the grown servants. All familiarity should be prohibited, but at the same time the reasons of this prohibition should be made manifest. "'Tis not because they are slaves, (should be said,) but because they are uneducated, unprincipled people, that you are instructed to avoid them. You are kept away for the same reason from dissolute, unprincipled white people. Children are apt to catch bad habits; therefore, while you are a child, I must keep you from bad examples. But you must pity these people while you avoid them. It is not their fault, but their misfortune, that they have not been instructed as you have in morals and religion. Pity them, therefore, and do all you can to promote their comfort and happiness; but at your time of life, you should associate with people who can improve you, not with those who would cause you to fall off from the improvement you have already acquired." Such language would have the desired effect upon children. They should also be encouraged to contribute their little mite towards the comfort of the dependants of the family: the old and destitute—the sick and helpless. Such offices enlarge the heart, and inculcate humanity. It is a good practice in a family of children, to keep them during their leisure hours, at work for the infants and the old people among the slaves. Parents should scrupulously avoid reproving their servants before children, unless they can do it with proper solemnity and self-command. It is grievous to think how many female tempers are destroyed, by indulging their acrid humours, where they can be indulged with impunity. I greatly fear that our national misfortune has sent many an accountable soul to its last audit, with a weight of crime that never could be cancelled.

It is too true, that women allow themselves to be fretted at trifles; that they are prone to fall into the pernicious

habit of suffering their tempers to blaze out on every occasion that can elicit provocation. This incessant fever of the soul wears out the constitution, and furrows the face with wrinkles before the meridian of life is attained. *Ill-temper*, I regret it, is the scourge of woman! There are so many modes of self-indulgence emanating from that source, that the moralist can scarcely enumerate them. Peevishness, impatience, passion, suspicion, all have alternate sway; and sometimes *envy*, that malignant gnome, whose influence is deadly to the benign and social affections,—finds admittance through the turbid waters of domestic strife. I will not speak of *jealousy*, save to remark, that it is the deadliest foe to peace that ever broke from the pit where human vices are nurtured. Oh, that women would listen to the voice of warning, and turn their undivided energies against their bosom sins. The author of all good has placed them in retirement, let them not pollute the sanctuary chosen to shield them from a dangerous world, with evils sufficient to destroy the very germ of happiness for ever. Small indeed, are the beginnings of that potent instrument of misery; but habit strengthens every vice, and brings the weakest, in time, to an equality with the most powerful. Impatience of temper is usually considered a trifling evil. I once heard a lady assert, that her temper was not *bad*, it was only impatient, and she did not think that defect very important; but alas! in this instance, as in many others, she circumscribed her means of usefulness and happiness, by indulging what might soon have been conquered by steady resistance. Peevishness is also slightly regarded. They say it is the natural attendant of sickness, and must be excused; but while reason endures, it should be found at its post. It should be put forth against the errors existing in the character. How much are human sufferings aggravated by peevishness; and how miserable is the condition of those who are doomed to watch by the sick bed of a peevish per-

son! Depend on it, an ill-temper is one of the devils whose name is legion.

I once heard of a minister of the gospel, who married a bad-tempered woman on purpose to *try himself*. It was indeed a Roman Catholic penance, or rather it resembled the tortures that the Fakirs of India inflict on themselves in fanatical frenzy. An undisciplined temper is a general evil to all within its reach, as well as its possessor. It is a fruitful source of misery to that small, quiet circle, where, but for it, the dove of peace might build her nest. I fear the women of Virginia are rather remarkable for this defect; because, as I have already admitted, their peculiar circumstances bring abundant provocations to the domestic sanctuary. But their merit will be the greater, when they have successfully combatted these disadvantages. Let them but call in religion, the author of peace, to their aid, and I can faithfully promise them the victory in every conflict. Believe me, the instrument is not too strong for the occasion. If inferior agents are found inadequate to effect a purposed good, surely it is the part of wisdom to resort to others that cannot fail to prove efficient. Religion is the master spring of human virtue, let it be therefore employed to produce the paramount blessing of a good temper.

I remain ever yours.

LETTER XXIX.

Submission to the Divine Will.

MY DEAR MARY,

It is one thing to *know* the will of God, and another thing to *do* that will. The essential spirit of Christianity is included in this one sentence—"Thy will be done." As

the natural man owns no rule of action but his own will, so does the Christian acknowledge none but the will of his Maker. And yet true resignation is the hardest duty to perform that has ever fallen to the lot of man. He is always labouring at absolute submission, but when he has attained it in one instance, he finds the difficulty as great on the next occasion. Other lessons, when once learnt, remain with us; but this must be learnt anew whenever it is to be practised. And here, Mary, it gratifies me to be able to give honest, well-merited praise to the female sex. Though their sensibilities are more tender than those of men, they certainly resign themselves to the will of God with truer and more heartfelt submission. Religion, the master teacher of every virtue, is absolutely essential in this case. She has no auxiliary here; no artful imitator, or skilful substitute. Pride, it is true, wears her semblance boldly without; but a glance at the internal state reveals the utter incapacity of this agent. Yet is its claim often asserted, while the aching heart denies its validity. How often do we see the haughty spirit enduring, like the Indian at the stake, with unblanched cheek and changeless eye, the agonies which fill the bosom with wild commotion. The proud man says he is resigned, while every fibre of his physical system thrills responsively to the unmitigated sorrows of his heart. The Christian says he is resigned, while the undried tear is on his cheek, for God has spoken peace to his soul, and the inward storm of grief has subsided. All is calm within him, and the consolations of religion are already shedding their sunshine on the departing clouds of sorrow. Unqualified submission to God is imperatively required of his people. Faith is imperfect and inefficient, unless accompanied by this submission. The author of our being has promised, that all things shall work together for our good, if we surrender ourselves entirely to his will. This promise does not imply an exemption from trouble; it only promises that trouble shall

be overruled for our benefit, if we stand still and see the salvation of God.

Many weak Christians are found wanting in the hour of tribulation, from inability to surrender themselves as they are required to do. They drop daily from their tongues the comprehensive sentence—"Thy will be done," without having even considered its full, impressive import. They daily promise to do his will, without the ability, or perhaps the sincere desire to fulfil their promise. But let us reflect that these four monosyllables express the most exalted act of faith, and the most comprehensive promise of unqualified obedience. When we repeat this sentence we are virtually offering to give up our dearest possessions, if his will should require them—(and who can foresee his requisitions?)—We are solemnly renouncing all right to think, or act, or even to feel for ourselves. In short, whatever may have been our views, plans, or wishes, as relate to worldly things, we are renouncing *all* for the will of God. There are some paradoxes in Christianity, but, blessed be our Father, there are no contradictions. When we are required to surrender our will, we are made free from the bondage of sin, and enabled to rejoice in the liberty purchased for us by Christ. To be able to do the will of God, is freedom in itself; for until we can do his will, we are the slaves of sin. God puts this acknowledgment of submission in our mouths, that we may fully understand our duty, and earnestly require divine aid in performing it. "Enable me to do thy will," should be our frequent and fervent petition; but oh! is it not lamentable to reflect, how often the Lord's prayer is repeated, without the smallest weight or consideration being attached to this comprehensive clause!

One of the first and strongest evidences of true conversion is, a desire to know and do God's will. St. Paul exclaimed, "Lord, what wilt thou have me do?" and the jailor inquired, "What shall I do to be saved?" These were

signs that the new converts were not only willing, but desirous to give up self-government, and resign themselves implicitly to God. The example of the apostle is indeed striking. We behold him as a Pharisee, fiery, impetuous, cruel, and self-willed : we see him as a Christian convert, anxious to surrender his independence, and become the submissive servant of the Lord. And here let us consider the meaning of a term in very common use, the original sense of which seems to have been forgotten. *Devotion* implies an entire surrender of all that constitutes the accountable being to the great Master of the universe. To devote oneself, means to give up one's very being to another ; but we hear sometimes of the devotion of persons, who have not made this surrender. True devotion pledges the individual to an unqualified submission of his will to God. It does not consist in good works or prayers, and any specific act of duty ; but it demands firmness and consistency in following the known path of duty, however repugnant or distasteful it may be to the inclination. It implies self-denial, and energy in the performance of all known requirements. It always comprehends entire submission to such adverse events as God may please to send. If he chooses to deny a long sought and ardently desired blessing—"his will must be done" cheerfully and without murmuring. Some minds have a strong bias towards particular duties, and are dull and cold at others ; but we are required to do with all our might, what is set before us. There is more real devotion in treading quickly and contentedly, the unostentatious path of plain, every-day duty, than in launching forth in some new and conspicuous way that we have fashioned for ourselves. When the will is indeed devoted without reservation to its lawful ruler, the Holy Ghost visits the heart in his most precious character of comforter. We then see many things that were before hidden from our view.

We remark with wonder, the many strange ways by which God accomplishes his ends with us. His thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor can we possibly discover his intentions by any visible sign. But we walk by faith, and not by sight, therefore we must not expect to be made acquainted with what the Lord intends to do for us. Infidels assert, that it is strange that God should afflict his people, when he has omnipotent power, and can make all things pleasant to them; but these short sighted reasoners forget that this world is but a passing scene, intended as a probationary state. If the creatures of God were to be supremely happy here, they would be unwilling to be removed to "It is hard and cruel that these people should be taken away from happiness:" so that even unbelievers are forced another state. The opposers of Christianity would then say, to acknowledge the fitness and sufficiency of the present plan. But the view that the true Christian takes of God, is quite satisfactory to his heart and understanding. He has been shown that he is vile himself, and when tribulation comes, he sees in Christ a remedy for this vileness. Afflictions are often appointed to save us from adding guilt to misery, by bringing them on ourselves. Often, when the Christian is about to forget himself in prosperity and do some wrong thing, the rod is laid smartly on him, so as to disappoint his plan of iniquity. He falls at first into deep sorrow, and says, "Why is it thus?" But he soon discovers the hidden meaning of this dispensation, and blesses his Father that he has not been allowed to sin. Any thing is better for the true Christian, than that he should be left to himself when temptation is strong. We read of miracles ascribed, by erring superstition, to the fragments of the cross on which the Redeemer suffered: but when we look on the blessed results of *affliction*, the only true relic of that cross, we see a yet greater work performed. We are ready to declare our submission to Christ; but if he was

not to take from us many things that he requires us to surrender, we should find it impossible to perform our promises. Self-love is a subtle deceiver. Often do we feel resigned to dispensations immediately from God ; but when they come from the world, we are apt to be unruly, forgetting that he appoints these as well as the others.

We sometimes claim merit for our obedience, when it is voluntary, the thing being perfectly agreeable to our inclinations. But it is in crossing our own desires, that our *love*, which is the surest test of obedience, is fully proved. How often do self-complacent Christians commit the crime, for which Ananias and Sapphira were doomed to death. They pretend to give up all their will, and they retain the greater part of it ; that is to say, they promise implicit resignation, and yet hold fast with a tenacious grasp, many things that they are required to surrender. "Unless a man forsake all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple," is the declaration of our Lord himself. In the early days of Christianity this was literally fulfilled. The disciples quitted their friends, family, employment, and country, to follow their Master. Christians of the present day have only to forsake their will. This must be surrendered without reservation, before we can conscientiously say, "Thy will be done." I hope, my dear Mary, that you will hereafter repeat this sentence with a better and fuller comprehension of its import. Women, as I have already said, are apt scholars in the school of adversity, and it is one of the blessed advantages of their state of subordination in society, that they are often required to surrender their will to others. None but weak women are self-willed. The very first sign of moral and intellectual improvement in the sex, is a readiness to give up what is generally dear to human beings—their own will and wishes. May you be eminent in the practice of this virtue, my dear girl ; I can desire nothing better for you, as

Your true friend.

LETTER XXX.

Conclusion.

MY DEAR MARY,

I have endeavoured faithfully, to point out to you the relative duties of your sex, in the sphere which they fill by omnipotent decree. A quiet submission to the state of subordination ordained by heavenly wisdom, will ensure them as great a portion of happiness as human nature is capable of attaining. I never desire to see either a general or an individual struggle for female supremacy, nor even for perfect equality. Women are happiest and most respectable just where Providence has placed them. The better they understand, and the closer they adhere to this providential allotment, the more real peace they will enjoy. All deviations from the straight path of duty, under whatever pretext they may be made, must terminate in misery. I never knew an instance of domestic happiness, or even pecuniary success, where the female head usurped dominion over her lawful ruler. Even where the preponderance of understanding is on the woman's side, her government cannot be prosperous, because she is violating Scripture law, in assuming supreme power. It will always be found, that strict adherence to the humblest and most adverse path of duty, will produce happier results than the most promising and plausible deviation from the declared will of God.

I had rather see a friend of mine practising rigid obedience to a husband who was obviously incompetent to make a judicious ruler, than to hear her applauded for assuming the reigns of government into her own hands, because the whole world acknowledged her superiority. This much I have elsewhere declared, I believe.

I ask you, my dear girl, to attend particularly to my

injunctions on the subject of *temper*. Too many persons overlook this quality as an inferior consideration; but when we see how great a portion of human misery is daily resulting from this source, we surely cannot be excusable in neglecting it. Meekness of temper may be acquired by the most turbulent spirit; for it is one of the most prominent Christian graces; and every child who reads the Bible knows how those graces are to be obtained. Many people say, that a Virginia housewife is compelled to a high-spirited demeanour in the exercise of her arduous prerogatives. There never was a greater or a more dangerous error. Gentleness is perfectly compatible with firmness; and I know by experience, that both these qualities are indispensable in ruling a Virginia household.

The peculiar characteristics of the domestics over whom they bear sway, demands a perfect exercise of self-command in the *ruler*. Self-government is more especially necessary to those who manage servants of this description, than to any other species of potentate in the world. *Scolding* effectually destroys domestic peace, and it effectually disqualifies a woman for governing her family. There never was, and there never will be an instance of successful management, where this expedient is resorted to by female rulers. And yet many sensible women fall into the habit for want of a little patience in the beginning, and continue in it for want of a little vigorous self-exertion; and what is worse, they palliate their error, and mislead others into supposing it absolutely unavoidable.

Many persons persist in faults of which they must be inwardly conscious, because they want resolution to break the fetters of habit. Some misguided people imagine that a high tone of command, and a spirited exercise of power, are becoming in the head of a family. Those who covet distinction, will attract attention by making a fuss. They think they will be overlooked in the quiet nook of domestic

privacy, unless they make a noise to draw the attention of competent judges of their merits. But the quiet stream bears as great a volume of water to the ocean as the earth-quaking cataract; and woman, in silent and unostentatious retirement, may send upwards the costly incense of her heart to the Author of her being, with more certainty of acceptance, than when she is swept round in a vortex of worldly pursuits.

I would wish you, therefore, to *prefer* retirement as most favourable to the culture of feminine graces; but should your lot be cast among the high stationed females of our land, remember the *prerogatives* of your sex. These may be enjoyed by all who desire them. The world may be kept out of your heart by devotion, even when you live in a crowd, and it will find entrance into an unguarded heart in a desert or an hermitage. Worldly thoughts and passions abound every where, nor can they be shut out by the mere drawing a curtain, or shutting a door. They are the chosen and abiding inmates of many hearts, and they are not to be banished by secluding the person from company.

But these are favoured individuals, whose principles have been tested by an intercourse with mixed society; who have possessed their souls in peace amid the hurry and bustle of busy life. These favourites of heaven have shed the incense of their pure thoughts over the corrupt atmosphere of fashion and dissipation, and kept themselves unspotted from the world in the very centre of its seductions. And they have done this by asserting their sexual prerogatives. They have rejected power, for they have no scriptural right to it. They have yielded obedience where it was due, though they might have thrown off its obligations. They have shunned the glare of publicity, because they loved to shrink into congenial obscurity. They have used their advantages without abusing them, and steadily refused to *unsex* themselves, though opportunities have offered for the attainment of

invidious notoriety. At the same time their own quiet, unobtrusive duties have been rigorously fulfilled: The obligations of charity, coextensive as the benevolence of their hearts—the sweet courtesies of social life—the gentle interference with angry spirits for the purposes of peace-making—the secret prayer—the deep and faithful self-inspection—the meek surrender of all contested privileges—the single-hearted efforts to promote the glory of God, and cultivate good will among men. These indeed are feminine pursuits, and their sweet incense rises to heaven. Compare the characteristics here mentioned as exclusively feminine, with such as many of the sex love to appropriate to themselves: the admiration arising from distinction in fashionable life,—the cultivation of accomplishments solely calculated for display,—the enervating pursuit of sentimental frivolity, or the unbounded love of dissipation,—novel reading, with all its seductive accompaniments. In short, a volume would not suffice to enumerate the mistakes prevailing on the subject of female character and manners.

Little thought is wasted by mothers upon the future destinies of their daughters. They encourage undefined hopes of their success in life without any distinct preparation for specific duties. They wish them to be courted and admired in youth, and comfortably settled in life with good fortunes. This last consideration is paramount to every other. They will lead them to encourage rich lovers, without much caring for their mental qualities. Wealth covers as great a multitude of sins from worldly eyes, as charity does in the estimate of Christian virtues. When girls are married, their household establishments and equipages are objects of primary importance. Indeed, the same false estimate of human happiness seems to prevail throughout life, and many people die without having discovered that they have lived for nothing; that they have not enjoyed a single real good in existence.

In the characters I have sketched as illustrations of my observations, you will find many real traits of human nature, as they prevail *collectively*, not *individually*. Many of my strongest warnings are drawn from a faithful recollection of early errors of my own, which grace has happily enabled me to correct. I have ever deemed it an imperative Christian duty to expose candidly to our friends the mistakes of our own conduct. This is the proper use of experience. We should not be ashamed to acknowledge what we have been, because Christianity teaches us that all are *radically bad*; neither should we be backward in proclaiming the triumphs of that grace, which we profess to believe universal in its application to the errors of humanity.

For my own part, I hesitate not to declare, that I owe the possession of every trait which approximates towards virtue, to the influence of Christianity on my renewed heart. I had many things from nature which were called *good*, before I knew what real *goodness* was. Since conversion has opened my eyes, I see every thing through a new medium, and have learned to form an entirely new estimate of human worth. For this unmerited mercy, I cannot sufficiently glorify the Being from whom I have received it. My thoughts flow forth in intense desire to promote his glory. My feelings glow with ardent aspirations after higher attainments in grace.

Often, in the silent watches of the night, do I ask my heart, if there is no possible mode by which its overflowing gratitude for divine mercy can be expressed? It sometimes answers with promptings which tend to a public declaration of the individual mercies I have received. I dare not disobey these warnings of the Spirit. Let the cold in heart stigmatize me as an enthusiast, and the mere worldling attribute my conduct to carnal motives, still there is an inward evidence that my impulses come from above. To

that I have yielded in taking up my pen in behalf of my sex, and of that religion to which I owe every thing.

Let it not be thought that I have departed from my own rules of feminine propriety, in thus braving the ordeal of public opinion, as an author. My own experience has been peculiar, and the motive which prompts my present undertaking is one which I dare not resist, though it is at variance with every feminine feeling of my nature. In the service of religion we may admit the innovation of established rules. I appeal to those who, like me, owe every moment of peace, every feeling of virtue, and every hope of future bliss, to *religion*, for their support, under the censures of the fastidious, and the sneers of criticism, to *their* sympathy—to *their* true Christian charity—to *their* unprejudiced judgments do I surrender myself unflinchingly in this world, and to the great Author of my salvation in the world to come.







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Letter s on Female
Character

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